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THE ENJOYMENT OF LITERATURE



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THE ENJOYMENT OF LITERATURE

BY

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TO
JAY AND DAVID

137676

FOREWORD

One of the peculiarities which distinguish the present age is the multiplication of books.—*Samuel Johnson in 1759.*

Let us be lovers of books and let us read them, but let us not gather them with indiscriminate hands.—*Anatole France.*

Any one who notes the bewildering number of books in a bookstore or a large library may well ask: "Have these books anything for me? And if they have, who shall tell me what books to read and how to get the most out of them?" These questions are not easy to answer. He who searches persistently enough will always find books that interest him; but until he masters the art of reading, he will get little pleasure from many of the greatest books. In general, as Francis Bacon wrote three centuries ago, books "teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without [outside of] them, and above them, won by observation."

The Enjoyment of Literature is intended to help the inexperienced reader in his efforts to distinguish the best from the mediocre and the bad, and to get the most out of the best. This book can, however, be of assistance only to the reader who is in earnest and willing to work. It is intended primarily for those who already

have a genuine love for literature but are uncertain of their own taste and judgment. I hope the book will save such readers from certain pitfalls and help them to form intelligent standards of their own. I have tried not to force my individual tastes upon the reader. I would say to those who read my book what George Santayana said in the preface to his *Scepticism and Animal Faith*: "I do not ask anyone to think in my terms if he prefers others. Let him clean better, if he can, the windows of his soul, that the variety and beauty of the prospect may spread more brightly before him."

Introductory books do not usually include a discussion of literary theories and critical methods such as that given in the latter part of the book. If, however, the general reader and the college sophomore find help in Will Durant's *The Story of Philosophy* and H. G. Wells's *The Outline of History*, I can see no good reason for omitting my brief discussion of the theories and methods of literary criticism. How can we expect men and women to become independent judges of literature if we never acquaint them with such matters as these? A knowledge of the various critical attitudes will widen one's range of interests and make one more tolerant of what he does not like. Surely we may say of the study of literary criticism what William James said of the study of philosophy: "To know the chief rival attitudes towards life, as the history of human thinking

has developed them, and to have heard some of the reasons they can give for themselves, ought to be considered an essential part of a liberal education."

JAY B. HUBBELL.

DUKE UNIVERSITY

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THE ENJOYMENT OF LITERATURE

THE ENJOYMENT OF LITERATURE

I. WHY WE READ

Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. . . .
Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider.

FRANCIS BACON: *Of Studies*.

Literature is the effort of man to indemnify himself for the wrongs of his condition.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

Why do men and women read books? Have you ever noticed how various are the motives which turn us to books? Some of us read merely to pass the time away, or to save ourselves from boredom; some read in order to find something to talk about; others wish to impress somebody, or are afraid of being considered uninformed; some read from habit. One man may read in order to learn more about life, another for ideas, and still another for emotional stimulation. An occasional student reads because he wishes to learn to use the language more correctly and fluently.

These are the more common motives. Which of them move you—the better or the worse? Let us examine a little more carefully four or five of these motives. It is these incentives to reading that literature

must satisfy, and we shall understand better the nature of this great art after a brief analysis.

LITERATURE OFFERS A WAY OF ESCAPE

With many readers of a romantic bent—and with all of us in certain moods—literature offers a way of escape from unpleasant realities. When we are weary of the Here and the Now, we like to dream of the far-off in space or in time. In this mood there is no resource like a book, or, as Emily Dickinson has phrased it,

There is no frigate like a book,
To take us lands away,
Nor any coursers like a page
Of prancing poetry.

In his fascinating narrative, *Revolt in the Desert*, Colonel Thomas E. Lawrence mentions an experience which he had in a winter-bound Arabian village during the World War: "We were twenty-eight in the two tiny rooms, which reeked with the sour smell of our crowd. In my saddle-bags was a [copy of Malory's] *Morte d'Arthur*. It relieved my disgust. The men had only physical resources; and in the confined misery their tempers roughened." Those who have never discovered the resource of reading go to the movies or turn to idle day-dreaming. The best refuge is a romance. "Fiction," says Robert Louis Stevenson, in "A Gossip on Romance," "is to the grown man what play is to the child." "The great creative writer," he

continues, "shows us the realization and the apotheosis of the day-dreams of common men. His stories may be nourished with the realities of life, but their true mark is to satisfy the nameless longings of the reader, and to obey the ideal laws of the day-dream." For men so fortunate as to have preserved something of the eternal boy, there are no romances more satisfying than Stevenson's *Kidnapped*, *David Balfour*, and *Treasure Island*.

LITERATURE MAY EXTEND ONE'S EXPERIENCE

In an unromantic, or realistic, mood we read not to escape life but to learn more about it and to extend our limited experience of it. A novel by Thackeray or Balzac or a good biography gives one a feeling of reality, of aliveness. We feel that what we are reading, even if it is unpleasant, must nevertheless be true. Paradoxically, art can give us pleasure even when it deals with what is drab and commonplace. Even the ugly and the tragic may become absorbingly interesting. A part of our pleasure comes from our recognizing the truthfulness of the portrait, but much of it is due also to the author's ability to see more in life than we have seen. In Browning's poem the painter, Fra Lippo Lippi, explains why we like to see everyday life mirrored by the artist:

For, don't you mark? We're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed

Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that.

Literature, when supplemented by intelligent observation, can teach us much about human nature. The number of interesting people whom most of us know is quite limited. Literature offers us a means of extending our experience almost indefinitely. Biography and history can bring back the great men of the past—Johnson, Napoleon, Lincoln, Franklin. Individuals whom in actual life we should avoid may become extraordinarily interesting in the pages of a novel or upon the stage. In real life few of us have known such men and women as Huckleberry Finn, Uncle Remus, Falstaff, Hamlet, Becky Sharp, Jeanie Deans, Sam Weller, Eustacia Vye, Tartuffe, Jean Valjean, or Silas Lapham.

Not only may literature extend enormously the range of our experience; it can also greatly widen the bounds of our sympathies. One cannot read Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or *Anna Karénina* and still feel that all Russians are half-savage revolutionists, nor Hamlin Garland's *Main Travelled Roads* and think of all farmers as "rubes" and "hicks." Literature can help us to escape the narrowing influences of our own nation, race, religion, social class, profession, our years, our temperament, the age in which we live. If our reading does not make us wiser, more tolerant, and more sympathetic, it has failed in one of its chief aims.

Literature is not a substitute for living; it is a way of living—a means of widening and intensifying one's life. When we have read a play by Shakespeare or a novel by Thackeray, we ought for days afterwards to be able to see the world and its people through the far-seeing eyes of the poet or the novelist. After reading the poems of Burns or Wordsworth, one ought to be able to find unsuspected beauty in a Texas prairie, a Carolina cotton field, or a back street in any town or city. If one knows how to read, the accomplishment places the reader temporarily on a footing of something like equality with the masters. "We are all poets," said Carlyle, "when we *read* a poem well."

LITERATURE AND CONDUCT

If literature is a criticism, or interpretation, of life, as Matthew Arnold taught, it should have a definite relation to the problem of how to live rightly. Literature must not be didactic, however, or it will defeat its purpose. Preaching is not a function of literature, especially of poetry. "Literature does not argue," said Cardinal Newman, "it declaims and insinuates; it is multiform and versatile; it persuades instead of convincing; it seduces, it carries captive; it appeals to the sense of honor, or to the imagination, or to the stimulus of curiosity; it makes its way by means of gaiety, satire, romance, the beautiful, the pleasurable."

There is a certain type of fiction which tends to relax

the fibers of the will if it is read too exclusively. Plato banished certain types of poetry from his ideal republic because they appealed to the emotions rather than to the will or the reason. "The best romance," said Ruskin, "becomes dangerous, if, by its excitement, it renders the ordinary course of life uninteresting, and increases the morbid thirst for useless acquaintance with scenes in which we shall never be called upon to act." An American novelist, William Dean Howells, has condemned this type of fiction as severely as any moralist:

If a novel flatters the passions, and exalts them above the principles, it is poisonous; it may not kill, but it will certainly injure; and this test will alone exclude an entire class of fiction, of which eminent examples will occur to all. Then the whole spawn of so-called unmoral romances [this is a hit at Stevenson], which imagine a world where the sins of sense are unvisited by the penalties following, swift or slow, but inexorably sure, in the real world, are deadly poison: these do kill. The novels that merely tickle our prejudices and lull our judgment, or that coddle our sensibilities or pamper our gross appetite for the marvellous are not so fatal, but they are innutritious, and clog the soul with unwholesome vapors of all kinds. No doubt they too help to weaken the moral fibre, and make their readers indifferent to "plodding perseverance and plain industry," and to "matter-of-fact poverty and commonplace distress."

No one should limit his reading to a single type, least of all to romantic or sensational fiction. One will do well to read more often the great realistic novels, the tragedies of Shakespeare, and the essays of the ethical stimulators, Marcus Aurelius, Emerson, and

Carlyle. The great poets sometimes assume the prophet's mantle. They quicken our sympathy with the right, our scorn for the wrong. Contact with a great and noble personality, like that of Milton or Dante, makes one a better man or woman. And yet the aims of literature are so various that one cannot agree with Emerson that its one aim is "to inspire." The great writer reveals to us life in all its beauty and sadness and complexity as he sees it, but he rarely regards it necessary to attach a moral, which only the stupid would fail to see anyway.

BEAUTY OF FORM

Thus far we have considered only the content, or subject matter, of literature, but a large part of our pleasure in reading a story or a poem is due to its formal, or technical, qualities. Few, to be sure, read a story or a poem purely for its structure or its style; and yet who cares to read a poorly written story, no matter what its content may be? Far more of the reader's pleasure comes from form than he usually suspects. Stevenson goes so far as to say, "There is, indeed, only one merit worth considering in a man of letters—that he should write well; and only one damning fault—that he should write ill." In some writers, like Poe and O. Henry, the content is slight; in others, like Tennyson and Longfellow, it is somewhat commonplace. But there is a pleasure in finding even a platitude well ex-

pressed. What is there of originality or freshness about the thoughts expressed in Gray's famous "Elegy"? Practically nothing, and yet we all like it because we find here, in Pope's phrase, "What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed."

LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

The study of literature has an incidental but very practical value for the person who wishes to improve his writing or conversation. Any teacher of English composition will tell you that almost invariably his best students have acquired, usually at home, the habit of reading good books. Students who come from homes where there are few books rarely write easily or correctly. Reading gives one a wider vocabulary and cultivates a feeling for the finer shades of meaning in words. To profit fully, however, one must work systematically. Reading, conversation, and writing should all find a place on one's program. There is much wisdom in Francis Bacon's famous sentence, "Reading maketh a full man; conference [speech, discourse] a ready man; and writing an exact man."

In his autobiography Benjamin Franklin tells us how he improved his writing by a systematic imitation of the *Spectator* papers of Steele and Addison. Stevenson, in "A College Magazine," has described his somewhat similar experiences in playing "the sedulous ape" to the authors whom he admired:

Whenever I read a book or a passage that particularly pleased me, in which a thing was said or an effect rendered with propriety, in which there was either some conspicuous force or some happy distinction in the style, I must sit down at once and set myself to ape that quality. I was unsuccessful, and I knew it; and tried again, and was again unsuccessful and always unsuccessful; but at least in these vain bouts, I got some practice in rhythm, in harmony, in construction, and in the co-ordination of parts.

CONCLUSION

These, then, are the chief motives for the reading of books of permanent value. In later chapters we shall recur to all but the last. If your taste is catholic, you will have found that all of these functions of literature appeal to you. Do not ignore any one of them. And do not make the mistake of reading a book in a spirit alien to that in which it was written. To get the best out of any book, one must read it sympathetically.

Finally, do not forget that into the making of a great book go years of thought and of living, sometimes of tragic experience, and months and months of painstaking writing and revision. "For books," as John Milton well said, "are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them . . . a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." Of his book,

says Ruskin, an author would say: "This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved, and hated, like another; my life was as the vapour, and is not; but this I saw and knew: this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory."

II. IMPROVING ONE'S TASTE

Your taste has to pass before the bar of the classics.

ARNOLD BENNETT.

There is then creative reading as well as creative writing.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

In an age of almost universal education, of innumerable good libraries, and of inexpensive editions of standard authors, the treasures of the world's literature are open to practically everybody. Forever gone is the day when only the few could read and only the rich could afford to own books. And yet with all these advantages, how few discover that reading is even a refuge from boredom! Only when the radio or the automobile is out of repair or when it rains so that they cannot go to the movies, do the majority sit down to read. And of the few who do read, how many attempt to explore their heritage, the great books of English and American literature? The vast majority are content with a popular novel, a newspaper, or a cheap magazine.

You, I assume, are an exception; at least you have an ambition to read the best—otherwise you would hardly be reading this book. But if you were to subject your own taste to a rigid testing, would you not find it de-

fective at many points? Be honest with yourself, for no man can improve his standards without first facing his shortcomings. Let me ask you some searching questions which may reveal your deficiencies—to yourself alone.

Do you shun tragedies and novels which end unhappily? If you do, is your motive altogether creditable? Do you hate essays, especially critical essays? Do you dislike history and biography? Do you ever read poetry purely for pleasure? Do you dislike all big books? All old books? When you read a novel, do you skip the descriptive passages? Do you read every word or do you skim over many passages, reading a little here and a little there? Is your taste limited to recent novels? To American novels? To short novels? Do you dislike a book which makes you think? Is reading for you a sort of emotional dissipation? Do you enjoy Thackeray and Hawthorne as much as you do Zane Grey and Anita Loos? Do you like Edgar Guest better than Robert Frost, or Gene Stratton-Porter better than Edith Wharton? Can you read George Eliot and Jane Austen with genuine pleasure? Do you find Dante and Milton dull? Do you prefer musical comedy to the plays of Bernard Shaw and Eugene O'Neill? Do you ever read any magazine more intellectual than those which can be bought for a nickel or a dime? Do you get real pleasure from a story in *Harper's* or a book review in *The Nation*? Are you afraid of being called

a highbrow? Do you ever pretend that you like a book which really bores you? When a book does bore you, do you ever ask yourself why you find it dull? Can you give any good reason for liking certain books? Do you find these questions so embarrassing that you do not wish to hear any more? Did you skip any of the questions? A reader seriously concerned about himself would not have skipped.

Let us try one more experiment. Take a copy of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* or any other good anthology of English poetry, and, as you turn the pages, classify the poems which you have read before under three heads: first, the poems which you dislike; second, those that leave you indifferent; and, third, those which give you positive pleasure or move you strongly. Try the experiment before you read any further.

Now that you have (I assume) tried the experiment conscientiously, figure your percentage of appreciation. Do you really care for one-fourth of the poems which are generally regarded as great? How, in particular, have you classified Shakespeare's "When to the Sessions of Sweet, Silent Thought," Milton's "Lycidas," Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality," Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," and Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale"? And do not say that it makes no difference whether or not you like poetry. It matters a great deal. If you are capable of enjoying great poetry, you will

enjoy great prose all the more, for in many essentials they are the same. Besides, prose is a comparatively recent development. Even when one includes the prose masterpieces of the last two hundred years, it still remains true that most of the supreme masterpieces of the world are written in verse.

Essentially, literature is one. The differences between biography and fiction, comedy and tragedy, poetry and prose are of course important; but they are not, relatively speaking, large. They are less important, for you, than the differences between a good novel and a bad one. If you enjoy a novel like *Vanity Fair*, there is no sufficient reason why you should not enjoy a biography like Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* or Boswell's *Johnson*. If you enjoy Shakespeare's plays, which are in verse, why should you not like his sonnets, or Milton's, or Wordsworth's? If you like *Treasure Island*, you should find Stevenson's essays equally delightful and somewhat more substantial.

Do not say of the books which you dislike, "Oh, well, they are probably not good anyway." If intelligent and discriminating readers derive pleasure from them, they cannot be bad books. The trouble is that you have not, so to speak, learned to "tune in." The mere ability to read and speak the English language does not make one a competent judge. Would you presume to pass judgment, without some special training, upon a statue, a painting, a symphony, a machine?

Perhaps you have already said to yourself that, in some obscure, highbrow sense of the word, the English classics may be *good*, but not in the ordinary meaning of the word. Some of the classics, it is true, are perhaps overrated, but not very greatly; and most of them are not overrated at all. If you do not find them good, the fault in all probability lies in you. You have not yet learned how to read them with understanding and appreciation. There is nothing mysterious or unnatural about literary standards. Just as science is an entirely natural development from common sense and systematic observation, so literature is a natural development from our common speech; it is recorded conversation raised to the level of a fine art. Literature is a way of saying things which are worth while in such a way that they will be permanently interesting and valuable.

WHAT CAUSES DEFECTIVE TASTE?

Thus far I have tried to awaken you to a realization of the limitations of your taste. This was a necessary and unpleasant preliminary. Try to find the causes of these deficiencies and, if you can, set about getting rid of them. Most of the defects of your taste, if you like, you may attribute to your early training in home and school. "Above all things, as a child, [one] should have tumbled about in a library," said Oliver Wendell Holmes. "All men are afraid of books, that have not handled them from infancy." Too many American col-

lege youths come from homes where there are few books. Sometimes a boy or a girl learns from his teacher that some books at least are delightful to read. Too often, however, the pupil learns in school to associate literature with grammar, spelling, punctuation, and other unpleasant tasks. The teacher who by way of punishment assigns a poem to be memorized is almost certain to give his or her pupils a distaste for poetry.

One great difficulty in education is to introduce the pupil to the right book at the right time. It is perhaps altogether impossible to do this with all the members of any class in school or college. Most of us can recall books which we read in high school, that we have never liked since. As a boy, I read Scott's *Ivanhoe*, outside of school, with great delight. I was so much interested that I read all his other novels that I could find; and I can still read Scott with pleasure. But I read my first Dickens novel when at the age of twenty-three I had to teach *A Tale of Two Cities*. Later I had to teach *Pickwick Papers* and *David Copperfield*; but, after nearly twenty years of teaching, I must confess that, while I see much to admire in Dickens, I do not like his novels and never read one of them voluntarily. If I had first read Dickens in my early teens, I am sure that I should have liked him.

The English novelist, H. G. Wells, has described his first reading of Plato's *Republic*:

I read it when I was a boy of 16 on the Downs above Harting in Sussex. It was one of the great events of my life. It is the first of Utopias. It is the most liberating book in the world. It asserts the completest release of human thought from traditionalism; it questions every institution; it is saturated with the faith that man can make his life and future what he will.

John Masefield, after a youth spent upon the sea, discovered Chaucer, as he tells us in the preface to his *Collected Poems*:

I did not begin to read poetry with passion and system until 1896. I was living then in Yonkers, N. Y. (at 8 Maple Street). Chaucer was the poet, and the *Parliament of Fowls* the poem of my conversion. I read the *Parliament* all through one Sunday afternoon, with the feeling that I had been kept out of my inheritance and had then suddenly entered upon it, and had found it a new world of wonder and delight. I had never realized, until then, what poetry could be.

Some of the difficulties presented by the English classics we read in school are very real. England is a foreign country now. The landscape, the people, their point of view, their manners are all different from ours. In reading Shakespeare, we find many strange things to which we must become accustomed. There is much also that we need to forget. In his Prologue to *The Earthly Paradise* William Morris has pointed out some of the aspects of modern life that we must forget if we would understand Chaucer's point of view, the life he lived, and the people for whom he wrote:

Forget six counties overhung with smoke,
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,
And dream of London, small, and white, and clean,
The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green;
Think below that bridge the green lapping waves
Smite some few keels that bear Levantine staves,
Cut from the yew wood on the burnt-up hill,
And pointed jars that Greek hands toiled to fill,
And treasured scanty spice from some far sea,
Florence gold cloth, and Ypres napery,
And cloth of Bruges, and hogsheads of Guienne;
While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey Chaucer's pen
Moves over bills of lading—'mid such times
Shall dwell the hollow puppets of my rhymes.

Too many of us lack what we may call the historical imagination. We have no feeling for the past, no consciousness that the present grows out of it and is conditioned by it. We forget that the past was once as real as the present and that the present will soon belong to the past. In this respect Huckleberry Finn represents the average American of today. At the beginning of his story Huck tells us how the Widow Douglas tried to "sivilize" him: "After supper she got out her book and learned me about Moses and the Bulrushers, and I was in a sweat to find out all about him; but by and by she let it out that Moses had been dead a considerable long time; so then I didn't care no more about him, because I don't take no stock in dead people."

SOME SUGGESTIONS

A few practical suggestions may help you. Be careful that you do not read literature in the way we all read a newspaper, skipping every other word and perhaps half the lines. In poetry or imaginative prose you will miss the rhythm and much of the meaning whenever you skip a single word. Literature, especially poetry, is like music; it must be heard. If you are not an experienced reader, you will find it well to read aloud, enunciating distinctly every syllable as though it were music.

Reading should not be a passive affair. A poem or an essay is merely cold print until you re-create in your own mind what the author felt and thought as he wrote it. You must enter enthusiastically into his mood, see things as he saw them, feel them as he felt them, love what he loved, and hate what he hated.

Before you read a book, find out what the author tried to do, and judge him by his success or failure to accomplish his aim. Do not condemn him for what he has obviously not attempted to do. The ideal reader, as described by Guy de Maupassant, asks of the artist simply this, "Make for me something beautiful, in the form which suits you best, following your own temperament."

Finally, read with some system—although there is something to be said for desultory reading too. Fit, if

you can, the book to the mood. Do not limit your reading to any one type, particularly romantic fiction. If you dislike biography or poetry, keep reading until you find something that you really enjoy. And make sure that when you think you are reading, you are not day-dreaming. Put your whole mind and soul into the book before you if you would get the most out of it. (An occasional student needs to be reminded that he should not read when he is very tired and should always take the trouble to make himself comfortable and to select a good light to read by.)

If when you have done your best, you are still unable to enjoy *Othello*, *Paradise Lost*, or *Henry Esmond*, do not be discouraged. Try again when you are a little older. It is unfortunate that so many of us do most of our reading while we are still immature, for the greatest books were meant, not for high school and college students, but for mature men and women. One who has never experienced love, marriage, the love of children, failure, success, a great joy, or a great sorrow is somewhat handicapped for the full understanding of Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe, Molière, and Tolstoy.

One thing more. Do not ever deceive yourself into imagining that you like a particular book—whether it is a classic or a best seller—merely because the book is highly praised. If you cannot see and feel its greatness for yourself, be honest and admit the fact. If you are in school or college, beware of accepting without thor-

ough testing your teacher's estimate of any book—even though you are compelled to admit that *Hamlet* and *Paradise Lost* are beyond you at present. "One of the last secrets we learn as scholars," said Emerson, "is to confide in our own impressions of a book. If Æschylus is that man he is taken for, he has not yet done his office when he has educated the learned of Europe for a thousand years. He is now to approve himself a master of delight to me. If he cannot do that, all his fame shall avail him nothing. I were a fool not to sacrifice a thousand Æschyluses to my intellectual integrity." Contrast this attitude with that of the critic in the Epilogue of *Fanny's First Play* by Bernard Shaw: "You don't expect me to know what to say about a play when I don't know who the author is, do you? . . . If it's by a good author, it's a good play, naturally. That stands to reason. Who is the author? Tell me that; and I'll place the play for you to a hair's breadth."

The five chapters which follow deal with the methods and materials of literature. Some understanding of characters, plot, point of view, words, and verse is essential to a full appreciation of what one reads. The later chapters will discuss more fully the questions raised in the two you have already read: What are the functions of literature and literary criticism? What constitutes greatness in literature? How are we to distinguish the good from the mediocre and the bad?

III. MEN AND WOMEN, REAL AND IMAGINARY

The History of the world is but the Biography of great men.
THOMAS CARLYLE.

The permanent value of a play . . . rests on its characterization.

GEORGE PIERCE BAKER.

Long before he became president, Woodrow Wilson said, "I believe that the catholic study of the world's literature as a record of spirit is the right preparation for leadership in the world's affairs, if you undertake it like a man and not like a pedant." The study of literature helps us to know better both our own selves and human nature in general, for literature is a reflection of life and one of its functions is to hold the mirror up to human nature.

Literature reveals the tremendous capacities of man for good and for evil. We begin to perceive our own evil potentialities when we become acquainted with Iago and Fagan, Lady Macbeth and Becky Sharp. Of these we may well say, as a great preacher remarked of a passing drunkard, "There but for the grace of God go I." We think better of human nature when we meet Imogen and Jeanie Deans, Jean Valjean and Henry

Esmond. We feel that we have something of their nobility latent in us, however poor our actions may be.

But why turn to books, some one may ask, when we can study human nature at first hand in the office, on the street, wherever we go? By all means, we should study the people about us, but this alone is insufficient. Our circle of acquaintance is too limited; it includes no Lincoln, no Socrates, no Hamlet, no Leatherstocking. In a sense, as Emerson said, great men are more ourselves than we are. Most of the men we know are imperfect specimens of humanity, "half-men," in Browning's phrase. Perhaps if we could know them better, we should see in them illustrations of Hamlet's famous lines: "What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!"

It is better sometimes to turn to men and women grown to full stature—even though we must go to biography and fiction to find them. The people about us, moreover, are in many ways difficult to know. Their inner lives are often a sealed book to us. Their manners do not permit them to tell us their deepest joys, sorrows, and ambitions. The vast majority of the great men are dead; it is no longer possible to know them except through the medium of books. By the aid of literature—the best bridge between the present and

the past—we may know the dead better than we can know many of the living. We may know Samuel Pepys, George Washington, Henry Esmond, and Jean Valjean better than we can know, for instance, the leading political figures of our own time. Our education is not complete until we know something of the great men of other periods than our own, for no man can know his own age who knows nothing of any other. We need to know Plato, St. Paul, St. Francis of Assisi, Newton, Franklin, Napoleon; and we need also to know the great characters of fiction, drama, and poetry, Hector, Hamlet, and Faust.

BIOGRAPHY

But for the historians and the biographers, we should know very little of that long past which makes us what we are. It is not every historian, however, that can make the past re-live itself before our eyes. Without the literary gift, the historian may fail in spite of his learning.

In general, the study of history does not attract the present-day reader except in the form of biography. Today, however, biography, for the first time perhaps, rivals the novel in popularity. Contemporary novelists, like Rupert Hughes and W. E. Woodward, have turned aside from their own field to write biographies of Washington which are more interesting than their novels. Perhaps novelists as well as their readers, as

they grow older, find that men and women who have actually lived are more interesting than the imaginary.

In spite of the prevalent notion that any one who can write at all can write a biography, the writing of a satisfactory book on the life of any man is an exceedingly difficult task. Too rarely, even in the college curriculum, does the art of biography receive the attention which it deserves. If we examine some of the biographer's difficulties, we shall have a keener appreciation of his achievement.

The first difficulty is the finding of adequate materials. What has the biographer of Lincoln or Queen Elizabeth to go on? Only written materials. He cannot interview the dead; he must depend upon documents, letters, reminiscences, often biased by enmity or by friendship and perhaps based upon mere gossip. These written materials are often fragmentary, inaccurate, and difficult to interpret. Usually there are great gaps which the biographer can bridge only by inference or conjecture. Is it any wonder that John Masfield should hold the opinion which he expresses in his poem, "Biography":

When I am buried, all my thoughts and acts
Will be reduced to lists of dates and facts,
And long before this wandering flesh is rotten
The dates which made me will be all forgotten;
And none will know the gleam there used to be
About the feast days freshly kept by me,

But men will call the golden hour of bliss
"About this time," or "shortly after this."

Even when the biographer has adequate materials, other difficulties remain. There is the problem of interpretation. How shall he disentangle the man from the enormous mass of uncertain evidence? How is he to know what to believe? Without sound training in methods of research, without wide knowledge of the historical field, he can never get at the real man. And supposing that the biographer has solved all these difficulties, what does it all avail him unless he can make his subject live again for *us*? The biographer needs not only a sense of fact and proportion, imaginative sympathy, and the gift of interpretation; he must have a sense of style and the ability to portray character—in short, he must be something of a literary artist if he is to make the man live for his readers.

Perhaps the biographer can never be sure that his story, however consistent, is altogether the true one. There are the limitations of the writer's own prejudices. Between the biographer and his subject there are often many differences—differences due to temperament, age, race or nationality, sex, profession, religion, politics, social status, etc. Is it any wonder that no wholly satisfactory biography has ever been written—perhaps never can be? Nor is it any wonder that every generation insists that the great men of the past be reinterpreted from its own point of view. The number

of lives of Lincoln and Napoleon is legion; yet new biographies of both appear every year.

In spite of certain exceptions like Plutarch's lives of eminent Greeks and Romans, biography received little attention before the eighteenth century, which gave us the greatest and most influential of English biographies—James Boswell's life of Samuel Johnson. Boswell began his preparations for the writing of his book years before Dr. Johnson died. He made full notes of the conversations in which Johnson took part, and he asked innumerable questions of the Doctor and his friends. He had, as a result, more and better materials than Johnson's other biographers, although there was much in regard to Johnson's early life that Boswell did not know. Boswell's great biography was not in any sense an accident, and Boswell was not the stupid sycophant that Macaulay thought him. He was an artist with an eye for effective detail; he knew how to bring out the lights and the shadows of his picture and to give it the indispensable air of reality. So far as possible, Boswell let Johnson tell his own story; that is, he quoted freely from Johnson's letters, conversation, memoranda, and books. The method has been followed by many later biographers, but no one has ever equaled Boswell's achievement.

Two or three tendencies mark the present-day biography, which is a very different thing, as a rule, from that of half a century or more ago. The contemporary

biographer is often a muckraker, whose chief concern is to show up the faults of his subject. A partial explanation of the vogue of the scavenger biography is found in the current reaction against the prudish, sentimental, hero-worshiping, and self-righteous air of many Victorian biographies. The contemporary biographer is skeptical of lofty motives and unselfish actions; he likes to uncover the family skeleton. The Freudian psychology has suggested to him that the true key to a man's nature is found in complexes, unsatisfied desires, especially the sexual. The method fits certain subjects of course, and is perhaps no worse than the type of biography which it has practically replaced—it is certainly more readable—but it leads to a very one-sided emphasis in the life of such a man as Washington or Lincoln. No great man is adequately interpreted in terms of a formula.

The contemporary biographer employs the technique of prose fiction. He knows how to tell a story effectively. His subject makes an interesting villain or comic figure if not an admirable hero. He groups and describes his characters well. His story moves rapidly and is not overloaded with cumbrous details. But many of our popular biographies are nothing more than biographical fiction. M. Maurois, perhaps aware of this, called *Ariel* a Shelley romance. Most of his facts are measurably true; but, we ask, is this all you have to say of the poet who wrote "To a Skylark" and

Prometheus Unbound? M. Maurois has quite ignored the important fact that his hero was, first of all, a poet whose poems are almost our only reason for being interested in Shelley at all. There is perhaps more of the real Shelley in the "Ode to the West Wind" than in all of *Ariel*.

The two most influential of contemporary biographers are Lytton Strachey, an Englishman, and Gamaliel Bradford, an American. Strachey's *Queen Victoria*, *Eminent Victorians*, and *Elizabeth and Essex* are masterpieces of skilful craftsmanship. One strongly suspects that Strachey's cynicism prevents his seeing certain things which otherwise he might see, but there are few more artistically written biographies in the language than these. Gamaliel Bradford, although he has written full-length studies of Pepys, Darwin, and Lee, gives his attention chiefly to what he once called *psychographs*. Psychography is the art of character portraiture. Bradford has brought to something like perfection the art of revealing the essential traits of a man's character and personality in the space of from twenty to fifty pages. He makes no pretense to being a profound scholar, however, and deals largely with materials accessible to all. Of his many books, I like best the early companion volumes, *Confederate Portraits*, *Union Portraits*, and *Lee the American*.

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES, LETTERS, DIARIES, ETC.

Great autobiographies are rarer than great biographies. Few men can—and fewer will—tell the story of their lives frankly and simply. Sincerity and naturalness are the first requisites of a good autobiography. A great danger is that the writer will make his story a conscious or unconscious defence of his own actions. Even the best autobiographies contain inaccuracies, especially in such matters as dates, for no human memory is to be wholly trusted. The two most interesting autobiographies, to me, are Benjamin Franklin's well-known story of his early life and the naïve life-story of the Italian artist and rascal, Benvenuto Cellini. Other notable examples are John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, Cardinal Newman's *Apoloogia pro Vita Sua*, Tolstoy's *My Confession*, John Muir's *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth*, and W. H. Hudson's *Far Away and Long Ago*. There are excellent shorter autobiographies by Edward Gibbon, the historian; Thomas Henry Huxley, the scientist; and John Stuart Mill, the philosopher.

Nearly akin to the autobiography is the diary or journal, in which the author records his actions or his thoughts. Samuel Pepys is the most famous of all diarists and a chief source of our knowledge of Restoration life. Quite different from Pepys's gossipy entries are the noble *Meditations* of the Roman Emperor,

Marcus Aurelius, and the *Journals* of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Nothing brings us closer to the men and women of the past than their letters—when they knew how to write naturally, giving their personality free play. Many of the best English letter writers flourished in the eighteenth century before the telephone, the telegraph, and the typewriter reduced letter writing chiefly to matters of business. To this period belong Thomas Gray, Horace Walpole, William Cowper, and, in France, Madame de Sévigné and Voltaire. Among great letter writers of other periods we must mention Cicero, Charles Lamb (the most charming of them all), Lord Byron, John Keats, Edward Fitzgerald, Robert Louis Stevenson, Abraham Lincoln, William James, and Walter Hines Page.

HISTORY

While biography has been cultivated chiefly in modern times, history has flourished since antiquity; and none of the moderns is more interesting than Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, Tacitus, and the historical writers of the Old Testament. In modern times too often history has suffered a divorce from literature, but there are striking exceptions in Gibbon, Macaulay, Green, and the American historians, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman. Macaulay, whose ambition was to write a history of England that would be as absorbingly in-

teresting as a novel, thought that the historian should emulate Scott, who made history attractive by emphasizing what the historians had left out. He explains his conception in an interesting "Essay on History," from which the following paragraph is quoted:

If a man, such as we are supposing, should write the history of England, he would assuredly not omit the battles, the sieges, the negotiations, the seditions, the ministerial changes. But with these he would intersperse the details which are the charm of historical romances. At Lincoln Cathedral there is a beautiful painted window which was made by an apprentice out of the pieces of glass which had been rejected by his master. It is so far superior to every other in the church that, according to the tradition, the vanquished artist killed himself from mortification. Sir Walter Scott, in the same manner, has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them in a manner which may well excite their envy. He has reconstructed out of their gleanings works which, even considered as histories, are scarcely less valuable than theirs. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated. The history of the government and the history of the people would be exhibited in that mode in which alone they can be exhibited justly—in inseparable conjunction and intermixture. We would not then have to look for the wars and votes of the Puritans in Clarendon and for their phraseology in [Scott's] *Old Mortality*; for one half of King James in Hume, and for the other half in *The Fortunes of Nigel*.

The writing of history is too large a subject for adequate discussion here, but we must note that since the middle of the nineteenth century new methods have greatly affected the study and the writing of history.

In particular, the modern historian is less concerned with battles, kings, ministers, and political matters and more with social, economic, and geographical factors. Something of the modern emphasis is suggested in the preface to John Richard Green's *Short History of the English People*, from which a passage is quoted below. Of Green's work Woodrow Wilson wrote, "It is his glory, indeed, as all the world knows, to have broadened and diversified the whole scale of English history."

The aim of the following work is defined by its title; it is a history not of English Kings or English Conquests, but of the English people. At the risk of sacrificing much that was interesting and attractive in itself, and which the constant usage of our historians has made familiar to English readers, I have preferred to pass lightly and briefly over the details of foreign wars and diplomacies, the personal adventures of kings and nobles, the pomps of courts, or the intrigues of favorites, and to dwell at length on the incidents of that constitutional, intellectual, and social advance in which we read the history of the nation itself. It is with this purpose that I have devoted more space to Chaucer than to Cressy, to Caxton than to the petty strife of Yorkist and Lancastrian, to the Poor Law of Elizabeth than to her victory at Cadiz, to the Methodist revival than to the escape of the Young Pretender.

Whatever the worth of the present work may be, I have striven throughout that it should never sink into a "drum and trumpet history." It is the reproach of historians that they have too often turned history into a mere record of the butchery of men by their fellow-men. But war plays a small part in the real story of European nations, and in that of England its part is smaller than in any. The only war which has profoundly

affected English society and English government is the Hundred Years' War with France, and of that war the results were simply evil. If I have said little of the glories of Cressy, it is because I have dwelt much on the wrong and misery which prompted the verse of Langland and the preaching of Ball. But on the other hand, I have never shrunk from telling at length the triumphs of peace. . . . If some of the conventional figures of military and political history occupy in my pages less than the space usually given them, it is because I have had to find a place for figures little heeded in common history—the figures of the missionary, the poet, the printer, the merchant, or the philosopher.

If you have not found history interesting reading, let me suggest that you try the third chapter of Macaulay's history of England and Green's memorable chapter on Queen Elizabeth.

FICTITIOUS CHARACTERS

The characters of fiction—and by fiction we mean not merely the novel and the short story but also the drama and the various types of narrative poetry—are often more interesting than are men and women who actually lived; and they are sometimes more significant. The imaginative creations of Homer, Shakespeare, and Tolstoy are as truly alive now as are Socrates, Newton, and Jefferson. Homer's Ulysses is more real to us than the historical Leonidas; Cervantes' Don Quixote is more alive than Philip II of Spain; and Falstaff is closer to us than Henry VIII. In one sense fiction is often truer than history. The subject of the biog-

rapher is not always a typical figure, but in fiction the hero must be representative. Achilles is not merely an individual soldier; he is also the ideal Greek warrior. Hamlet is not merely one Danish prince; he is in many ways the modern thinker. Becky Sharp is more than a cunning and unscrupulous schemer; she is the very type of the social climber at its worst. Tom Sawyer is the American boy of the small town; Uncle Remus is the faithful ex-slave and negro philosopher; Leatherstocking is the ideal American frontiersman.

One is likely to hold the mistaken notion that there is something mysterious about the methods which the novelist employs in portraying character. To paint a character so that it will be lifelike is extremely difficult, but there is nothing mysterious or unnatural about the process. You become acquainted with characters in books in much the same way as in real life you make new acquaintances. Have you ever stopped to ask how you came to know the characters of your friends and neighbors? When a stranger moves into the community, perhaps a friend who has known him gives you a hint as to what the newcomer is like. In the main, however, your judgment of the man is based upon his actions and his conversation. The novelist's methods are chiefly these three: action, dialogue, and description.

The novelist has greater freedom than the dramatist or the biographer. The latter cannot invent appro-

priate, revealing speech and action; he must use what he can vouch for as true. The dramatist can invent his action and his conversation; but, except in his stage directions, he cannot describe his characters or tell us what is going on in their minds. You will find it illuminating to read closely the opening pages of a novel or a play, carefully noting just how the writer builds up in your mind his conception of the leading characters.

TYPES OF FICTITIOUS CHARACTERS

In fiction there are many kinds of characters and there are many methods of classifying them. Some characters are comparatively simple, like Don Quixote and Uncle Remus; others, like Hamlet and Hedda Gabler, are more complex. A different mode of classification gives us static and developing characters. While the static character remains unchanged throughout the course of the story, the developing character changes in some important particular, apart from wealth and social position. The developing character is the more difficult to portray, and great examples are comparatively rare. Some examples of characters deteriorating or disintegrating are Shakespeare's Macbeth; Anna in Tolstoy's *Anna Karénina*; Lydgate in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, and Tito Melema in her *Romola*; and Brutus Jones in O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*. Examples of characters that are growing

stronger, and usually more complex, are Jean Valjean in Hugo's *Les Misérables*; Levin in Tolstoy's *Anna Karénina* and Peter in his *War and Peace*; Nora Helmer in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*; Clara Middleton in Meredith's *The Egoist*; Silas Marner in George Eliot's novel of that name; and Arthur Pendennis in Thackeray's great novel. Perhaps we should mention here characters who are pictured in successive novels at different ages and under widely different conditions. In Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* Beatrix is at first a child and then a beautiful young woman; in *The Virginians* she is a cynical and worldly old woman. Another example is the hero of Cooper's five Leather-stocking Tales. There are other excellent examples in the novels of Balzac and in Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*.

The type of character selected varies somewhat according to the literary form which the writer employs. The tragic hero is generally a character with a fatal weakness, like Macbeth, or a victim of circumstances, like Oswald Alving in Ibsen's *Ghosts*, or Ædipus in Sophocles' *Ædipus the King*. The epic hero must be a figure of national importance. Vergil's Æneas is a type of the noble Roman; he is also the bringer of the Trojan civilization to the shores of Italy. The hero of a novel need not be a person of importance, but he must be interesting and human. The hero of a romance is generally more nearly ideal than the leading figure in a realistic novel; the latter may be a weak

man, or even a criminal. In too many novels the characters are merely conventional types. Scott's peasants and outlaws are almost all well drawn, but most of his heroes and heroines are unreal.

More than any other one thing, it is great characters that keep novels, plays, and narrative poems alive long after they were written. To the modern reader, the *Iliad* and the *Divine Comedy* are chiefly interesting for the men and women portrayed in them. Contemporary fiction and drama, which are as a rule marked by skilful handling of plot and setting, are usually weak in characterization. Any second-rate novelist of today could rewrite one of Scott's novels and improve its technique, but who that is now writing can create character as he could?

GREAT FICTITIOUS CHARACTERS

Let me select from the novels, plays, and narrative poems of the world a list of great characters. No two persons would make quite the same list, and I shall not quarrel with any reader who wishes to add to, or subtract from, my list.

I shall begin with Homer. From the *Odyssey* I take wily Ulysses (Odysseus) and white-armed Nausicaa, the charming princess of the Phaeacians who all but falls in love with him. The *Iliad* contains a very notable gallery of portraits. Achilles, whose anger and its consequences are the theme of the poem, belongs in the

list; and so do Agamemnon, the commander of the Greek army; Nestor, the oldest and wisest of the Greek chieftains; Priam, the Trojan king; his son, Paris, who eloped with Helen; and Menelaus, her wronged husband. The greatest Homeric characters, however, are Ulysses, who first appears in the *Iliad*; Helen, the most famous woman in all literature; and Hector, the Trojan patriot, who fights not for glory and revenge, like Achilles, but for his home and country. The Roman epic, Vergil's *Æneid*, which also deals with the story of the Trojan War, gives us Æneas and Dido. Greek tragedy offers us a number of great characters. From Æschylus I select the Titan who defies Zeus (Jupiter), Prometheus, who reappears in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. From Sophocles I take the unhappy Œdipus and his daughter Antigone, who dies a martyr to duty. Euripides gives us two very different women: Alcestis, who dies that her husband may live, and Medea, who, to revenge herself upon her husband, slays her own children.

Medieval literature gives us Beowulf, the hero of the early English epic, and Siegfried of the German *Nibelungenlied* (Lay of the Nibelungs), the Icelandic *Saga of the Volsungs*, William Morris's *Sigurd the Volsung*, and Wagner's opera trilogy: *Walküre*, *Siegfried*, *Götterdämmerung*. From the Arthurian cycle of legends, which we know from the work of Malory, Tennyson, Arnold, Swinburne, Morris, Masfield, Rob-

inson, and others, I take King Arthur; Queen Guinevere; her unhappy lover, Lancelot; Galahad, the blameless knight who finds the Holy Grail; and the fated lovers, Tristram and Isolt. Dante's characters are nearly all historical, but that need not prevent our including the two women whom all the world knows, Beatrice Portinari and Francesca da Rimini. With Dante's Beatrice belongs the Laura of Petrarch's sonnets.

Chaucer, one of the world's greatest story-tellers, has a notable gallery of portraits in the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*. The best perhaps are the Knight, the Poor Parson, the Prioress, the Wife of Bath, and Harry Bailey, the genial host of the Tabard Inn. Chaucer's most complex character is Criseide [Cressida] in his *Troilus and Criseide*; although she proves faithless to her lover, Criseide is far from being a mere coquette.

Shakespeare has more great characters than any other writer; it is his ability to create character that, more than any other one quality, gives him his high place in world literature. Shakespeare's only ideal characters are his women. One hardly knows which of them to praise most highly—romantic Juliet; chaste Imogen; unsophisticated Miranda; the two Portias; Viola and Rosalind, who disguise themselves as boys; Lear's faithful daughter, Cordelia; Desdemona, whose faithfulness Othello discovers too late; Ophelia, whose

tragic death is described by the Queen. Not all Shakespeare's women are ideal, however; one must not forget Cordelia's wicked sisters, Regan and Goneril; the unscrupulous Lady Macbeth; and Cleopatra, the most subtle of them all. Iago is Shakespeare's most memorable villain, with Edmund of *King Lear* a close second. Henry V is his best portrait of a king. Of all Shakespeare's characters Hamlet appeals most to the modern mind, but very striking are Brutus, Hotspur, Mark Antony, Othello, Lear, and Prospero. Of Shakespeare's many clowns and fools perhaps the best are Touchstone in *As You Like It* and the fool in *King Lear*. Shakespeare's best humorous character is Sir John Falstaff of the two parts of *Henry IV*, in which also appears that attractive scapegrace, Prince Hal, afterwards King Henry V. But Shakespeare's characters are not limited to the strictly human. In Caliban he has portrayed a figure half man, half beast; and in Puck and Ariel he has created two as charming fairy-like creatures as one can find in all literature.

Milton's two best characters are the Satan of *Paradise Lost* and the blind hero of *Samson Agonistes*, into whom the poet put much of his own noble and austere character. Since the rise of the novel in the early eighteenth century, we find most of the great characters in prose fiction. Among the best—if not the best—are Sir Roger De Coverley of the *Spectator* papers of Steele and Addison; two lovable and impractical coun-

try preachers, Parson Adams in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, and Dr. Primrose of Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*; my Uncle Toby of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*; and Elizabeth Bennet of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

Scott has so many fine characters (along with many poor ones) that one hardly knows where to begin or to leave off. Best of them all, I think, is Jeanie Deans, of *The Heart of Midlothian*, who walks from Edinburgh to London to beg the Queen to pardon her unfortunate sister. Di Vernon in *Rob Roy* is far and away the best of Scott's romantic heroines, most of whom are merely conventional. His less conventional women are better; in particular, Meg Merrilies of *Guy Mannering* and the Jewess Rebecca of *Ivanhoe*. Scott's best characters in general are his outlaws: Rob Roy, of the novel which bears his name, Locksley (Robin Hood, famous in the popular ballads) in *Ivanhoe*, and Roderick Dhu of *The Lady of the Lake*.

Dickens's characters are drawn as sketchily as cartoons, but they have a strange vitality nevertheless. My own favorite is Samuel Weller of *Pickwick Papers*, but Mr. Micawber of *David Copperfield* is a close second. Pecksniff in *Martin Chuzzlewit* and Uriah Heep in *David Copperfield* are admirable studies in hypocrisy. Thackeray's characters are, I think, on the whole, the finest in English fiction. His women, who are as well drawn as the men, include such various types as

Becky Sharp, the cunning schemer of *Vanity Fair*; Beatrix, the coquette, whom Henry Esmond loved so long and vainly; and her mother, Lady Castlewood, whom he finally marries. The best of Thackeray's men are Henry Esmond; Colonel Newcome, of *The Newcomes*; Arthur Pendennis and his uncle the Major, in *Pendennis*; and old Dobbin of *Vanity Fair*. George Eliot's characters are perhaps less memorable than those of Thackeray or Scott, but she shows greater psychological insight than her predecessors. I think her most interesting characters are Maggie Tulliver, of *The Mill on the Floss*; Mrs. Poyser and Dinah Morris, the Methodist preacher, of *Adam Bede*; and Tito Melema, of *Romola*. Meredith's best characters are his women: Diana, of *Diana of the Crossways*, and Clara Middleton, of *The Egoist*. Of his heroes Evan Harrington, in the novel which bears his name, seems to me the best; but Sir Willoughby Patterne, the egotist of *The Egoist*, is perhaps the most remarkable character that Meredith ever created. Richard Blackmore's *Lorna Doone* has an attractive hero in the gigantic but gentle John Ridd.

Thomas Hardy's women, like Meredith's, are better than his men. The two most striking are Tess, in *Tess of the Durbervilles*, and Eustacia Vye, of *The Return of the Native*. Stevenson's best characters are his men. I like best Long John Silver, the one-legged pirate of *Treasure Island*, and Alan Breck Stewart, the "bonnie

fighter" of *Kidnapped*. The Irish soldier Mulvaney, of Kipling's *Soldiers Three*, must come into our list; and so must Soames Forsyte, of Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*. Perhaps we should include Barrie's Peter Pan, the boy who did not want to grow up, and Conan Doyle's famous solver of mysteries, Sherlock Holmes, who was modeled on Poe's M. Dupin.

Other European literatures we can notice only briefly. Molière's best character is Tartuffe (in *Tartuffe*), the finest study of the hypocrite in all literature. Of Molière's other characters I can mention only M. Jourdain, the bourgeois gentleman who discovers that he has been speaking prose all his life. Victor Hugo's best known character is Jean Valjean, of *Les Misérables*. Balzac has many memorable characters; I single out two: Father Goriot, of *Père Goriot*, and Eugénie Grandet, of *Eugénie Grandet*, memorable for her faithfulness to a forgetful lover. Dumas's four musketeers, of *The Three Musketeers*, must come in: D'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis. In more recent French literature perhaps the best are the hero of Rostand's famous play, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and the musician-hero of Rolland's long novel, *Jean-Christophe*. We must not omit Cervantes' immortal pair, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Goethe's best characters are Faust, Mephistopheles, and Gretchen, of *Faust*, and Mignon, of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. Ibsen's most notable characters, I think, are Peer

Gynt, Hedda Gabler, and John Gabriel Borkman, each of whom appears in a play bearing his or her name. Russian fiction is rich in character. Among these are Bazarov, of Turgeniev's *Fathers and Sons*; the brothers of Dostoievsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*; Anna, Levin, and Vronsky, of Tolstoy's *Anna Karénina*; and Peter and Natacha, of his *War and Peace*.

For so young a literature, American literature is rich in character. I place first, as Thackeray did, Leather-stocking of Cooper's five novels which bear his name. Long Tom Coffin of *The Pilot* is a nautical counterpart of Leather-stocking. Cooper's Indian heroes, Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hardheart, are far more lifelike than Longfellow's Hiawatha. Irving's two best characters, both found in *The Sketch Book*, are Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane. Hawthorne's finest characters are probably the leading characters in *The Scarlet Letter*: Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, and Roger Chillingworth; but Zenobia, of *The Blithedale Romance*, Hepzibah Pyncheon, of *The House of the Seven Gables*; and Donatello, of *The Marble Faun*, are also memorable. Melville's most memorable characters are probably Captain Ahab, of *Moby Dick*, who leads the cruise in search of the white whale, and Fayaway, the charming savage of *Typee*. Two of William Dean Howells's best characters are Bartley Hubbard, of *A Modern Instance*, and Silas of *The Rise of Silas Lapham*. Joel Chandler Harris's

Uncle Remus is the most lifelike negro character in fiction. Mark Twain's best character is probably Colonel Sellers of *The Gilded Age*.

Among the best examples of children in fiction are Arthur, in Shakespeare's *King John*; Little Em'ly and Traddles, in Dickens's *David Copperfield*; Little Nell, in *The Old Curiosity Shop*; Alice, in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*; Eppie, in George Eliot's *Silas Marner*; Jim Hawkins, in Stevenson's *Treasure Island*; Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn; and Booth Tarkington's Penrod.

We must not omit certain remarkable animal characters: Brer Rabbit of the Uncle Remus tales; Moby Dick, the terrible monster of Melville's *Moby Dick*; Rab, of Dr. John Brown's *Rab and his Friends*, the most interesting dog I ever read about; and the rooster of Chaucer's Nuns' Priest's Tale and Rostand's *Chantecler*.

If this list were not too long already, I should like to give a list of the most famous historical characters in fiction, such as the Elizabeth of Scott's *Kenilworth*, Richard Cœur-de-Lion of *Ivanhoe* and *The Talisman*; Joan of Arc in Schiller's *The Maid of Orleans* and Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*. But the reader who is interested would perhaps rather make the list himself.

IV. STORY

The most influential books, and the truest in their influence, are works of fiction. They do not pin the reader to a dogma which he must afterward discover to be inexact; they do not teach him a lesson which he must afterwards unlearn. They repeat, they rearrange, they clarify the lessons of life; they disengage us from ourselves, they constrain us to the acquaintance of others; and they show us the web of experience, not as we can see it for ourselves, but with a singular change—that monstrous, consuming *ego* of ours being, for the nonce, struck out.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

In the preceding chapter we have anticipated in a measure the subject of this, for one cannot have a story without characters. On the other hand, characters are best revealed in narrative; we come to know men, real or fictitious, from what they do and say.

A *story* deals with men and women in action. The three elements of every story are characters, plot or story, and setting or background. By plot is meant not the raw material but the incidents carefully arranged in some logical sequence. The material must be so proportioned as to emphasize the important things and to make upon the reader a definite impression or effect. Every story—whether prose or verse, novel, short story, or drama—must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. The telling of a story may be compared to the

tying and untying of a complicated knot. The first part of the story must do two things. It must acquaint us with the characters, their relations to one another, and the background in which they move; without this information the reader would find the story difficult to follow. In the first part of his story the writer must also get his story under way; he must complicate it, begin tying the knot. Near the middle of the story comes a turning point, where the untying of the knot begins. Gradually the story-teller untangles the complicated situation and brings the action to an appropriate end or *dénouement* (untying of a knot).

NARRATIVE METHODS

There are many ways of telling a story. In verse we have the epic, the ballad, the metrical romance, the idyl, the dramatic monologue, etc. In prose the chief narrative types are the novel, the short story, the drama (often written in verse in earlier periods), biography, and history. The non-fictional types were discussed in the preceding chapter. The writer should select the narrative type best suited to the story which he wishes to tell. There are good novels which would make better plays, better poems, or better short stories; and there are short stories and narrative poems which would be better in novel form.

Let us note some of the differences between prose and verse as narrative media. Verse offers a means of

heightening the beauty of a story and of intensifying its emotional appeal. Verse has, however, greater limitations than prose; much story material is not inherently poetic and is therefore inappropriate for verse. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and O. Henry's "A Municipal Report" would lose greatly if written in poetic form. Shakespeare wisely wrote his comic and low-life scenes in prose, although in general his medium was blank verse. In verse, description, characterization, and dialogue must be handled more succinctly than in prose. The poet must suggest rather than describe his background. It was inevitable that *The Lady of the Lake* should be much briefer than *Waverley* or *Ivanhoe*.

Sometimes a brief narrative, in prose or verse, may be the ideal form for a story. Dante gave only eighty lines to the story of Paolo and Francesca, but none of the later writers who have retold the story at far greater length have approached Dante's treatment in power or emotional intensity. The fifty-six lines of Browning's "My Last Duchess" make a deeper impression upon the reader than many a novel which treats a similar theme in four or five hundred pages. Some of the condensed autobiographies in Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* would lose in effectiveness if expanded to the length of the average short story. When a modern novelist, poet, or dramatist undertakes to retell in detail one of the great, simple stories of the Old Testament, he usually invites conspicuous failure.

Imagine the beautiful story of the wooing of Rebekah or the story of Boaz and Ruth dressed up for the jaded palate of the present-day novel reader! A modern writer, telling the story of the anointing of David, would feel it necessary to use too many details and employ too many adjectives; he could never attain the simplicity and directness of the Bible narrative:

And the Lord said unto Samuel, "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons." And Samuel said, "How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me." And the Lord said, "Take an heifer with thee, and say, 'I am come to sacrifice to the Lord.' And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee." And Samuel did that which the Lord spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, "Comest thou peaceably?" And he said, "Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice. And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him." But the Lord said unto Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither hath the Lord chosen this." Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, "Neither hath the Lord chosen this." And Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, "Are here all thy children?" And he said, "There re-

maineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep." And Samuel said unto Jesse, "Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither." And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he." Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

Among the narrative types of prose there are wide differences. The novelist has more space, more freedom than the short story writer, whose limitation in space requires greater compactness, suggestiveness, and unity of impression. The medium of the dramatist calls for greater compression than that of the novelist. The playwright has other limitations: he cannot describe or analyze his characters or tell us their thoughts at all times; he is limited to dialogue and action. His compensation is that, by means of his actors and stage setting, he can make his characters live out their story before our eyes. No other narrative form produces quite so powerful impression as a great play well acted. A good play may often be made over into a good novel, but few novels can be successfully dramatized; and few novels or dramas make good motion picture plays, although producers seem unaware of the fact that what was written for one narrative form usually does not suit another. What one misses on the screen is not action but dialogue and the author's com-

ment and interpretation; with these gone, the intellectual significance of the novel or drama is usually lost. The "talking movie," however, may develop into a very formidable rival of the regular drama.

There have been various attempts to divide story themes or situations into thirty or forty categories, with the implication that these are the only possible varieties. Stories do of course tend to follow certain beaten paths, but the variety of possible combinations of the situations, with different characters and different settings, is almost endless. Change the setting or change the characters, and you have a different story. Mark Twain's account of the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud in *Huckleberry Finn* is quite similar to the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, but few notice the similarity; it is in effect a different story. The situation found in *King Lear* reappears with interesting variations of character and setting in Balzac's *Père Goriot*, Turgenev's "A Lear of the Steppes," and Mary Wilkins Freeman's "A Village Lear," none of which owes much if anything to Shakespeare's great tragedy. No two writers will or can handle the same material in exactly the same way. Clayton Hamilton, in *A Manual of the Art of Fiction*, has indicated how George Eliot might have handled the story of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*:

Probably she would have begun the narrative in England at the time when Hester was a young girl. She would have set

forth the meeting of Hester and Chillingworth and would have analyzed the causes culminating in their marriage. Then she would have taken the couple overseas to the colony of Massachusetts. Here Hester would have met Arthur Dimmesdale; and George Eliot would have expended all her powers as an analyst of life in tracing the sweet thoughts and imperious desires that led the lovers to the dolorous pass. The fall of Hester would have been the major knot in George Eliot's entire narrative. It would have stood at the culmination of the *nouement* of her plot: the subsequent events would have been merely steps in the *dénouement*. Yet the fall of Hester was already a thing of the past at the outset of the story that Hawthorne chose to represent. He was interested only in the after-effects of Hester's sin upon herself and her lover and her husband. The major knot, or culmination, of his plot was therefore the revelation of the scarlet letter,—a scene which would have been only an incident in George Eliot's *dénouement*. It will be seen from this that any story which is extended in its implications may offer a novelist materials for any one of several plot-structures, according to whichever section of the entire story happens most to interest his mind.

The reader who wishes to make a thorough study of fiction will consult some standard manual, like that of Clayton Hamilton or Bliss Perry. Here we can note only a few important matters of narrative method. The first of these is the angle, or point of view, from which the story is told. Practically all of Poe's short stories are written in the first person; most of Hawthorne's are in the third. If the story is told by one of the characters, we have the added interest of listening to one who has had a part in a series of interesting experiences. The first person method has its disadvantages,

however, particularly in the novel. There are sure to be incidents in which the narrator has not taken part; we get them from him at second hand. Even when a story is told in the third person, we often see the action through the eyes of the hero or heroine. Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* would be quite a different novel if we saw everything through the eyes of Mr. Darcy instead of those of Elizabeth Bennet. If the novelist uses the third person method, he may assume an omniscient attitude and tell us what all his characters feel and think, or he may instead limit what he tells us to their actions and conversation, leaving it to us to draw our own conclusions.

Some novelists rely mainly upon action and description, but the best of them make an extensive use of dialogue, which is one of the most important elements of the narrative art. The dialogue helps to carry forward the action and to explain its significance. It is the best means of characterization, for it gives us the feeling that the characters are really alive. Good dialogue is usually highly charged with emotion. The debate between Nora Helmer and her husband in the last act of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is concerned with ideas, but the speakers feel passionately what they say. The history of fiction reveals greater improvement in dialogue than in any other one thing. The conversations in the novels of Scott and Hawthorne, for example, often seem to us stilted and unnatural; and all use of negro

dialect before the Civil War seems crude and inaccurate. Good dialogue is lifelike in every respect except that it is more expressive and more compact than even the speech of the educated.

The following passage from Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* is an excellent illustration of the skill with which a novelist may use dialogue, description, and action to bring out character. Henry Esmond, who tells his story in the third person, has been away from home fighting with Marlborough against the French. Lady Castlewood and her son ("my Lord") have just welcomed him to Walcote. His cousin, Beatrix, whom he left behind a girl, is now a very beautiful and coquettish young woman. She comes downstairs to welcome Harry and to flirt with him.

This laughing colloquy took place in the hall of Walcote House: in the midst of which is a staircase that leads from an open gallery, where are the doors of the sleeping chambers: and from one of these, a wax candle in her hand, and illuminating her, came Mistress Beatrix—the light falling indeed upon the scarlet riband which she wore, and upon the most brilliant white neck in the world.

Esmond had left a child and found a woman, grown beyond the common height; and arrived at such a dazzling completeness of beauty, that his eyes might well show surprise and delight at beholding her. In hers there was a brightness so lustrous and melting, that I have seen a whole assembly follow her as if by an attraction irresistible: and that night the great Duke [of Marlborough] was at the playhouse after [the victory of] Ramillies, every soul turned and looked (she chanced to enter the opposite side of the theatre at the same moment) at

her, and not at him. She was a brown beauty: that is, her eyes, hair, and eyebrows and eyelashes were dark: her hair curling with rich undulations, and waving over her shoulders; but her complexion was as dazzling white as snow in sunshine: except her cheeks, which were a bright red, and her lips, which were of a still deeper crimson. Her mouth and chin, they said, were too large and full, and so they might be for a goddess in marble, but not for a woman whose eyes were fire, whose look was love, whose voice was the sweetest low song, whose shape was perfect symmetry, health, decision, activity, whose foot as it planted itself on the ground was firm but flexible, and whose motion, whether rapid or slow, was always perfect grace—agile as a nymph, lofty as a queen—now melting, now imperious, now sarcastic—there was no single movement of hers but was beautiful. As he thinks of her, he who writes feels young again, and remembers a paragon.

So she came holding her dress with one fair rounded arm, and her taper before her, tripping down the stair to greet Esmond.

"She hath put on her scarlet stockings and white shoes," says my Lord, still laughing. "O my fine mistress! is this the way you set your cap at the Captain?"

She approached, shining smiles upon Esmond, who could look at nothing but her eyes. She advanced holding forward her head, as if she would have him kiss her as he used to do when she was a child.

"Stop," she said, "I am grown too big! Welcome, Cousin Harry!" and she made him an arch curtsy, sweeping down to the ground almost, with the most gracious bend, looking up the while with the brightest eyes and sweetest smile. Love seemed to radiate from her. Harry eyed her with such a rapture as the first lover is described as having by Milton.

"*N'est-ce pas?*" says my Lady, in a low, sweet voice, still hanging on his arm.

Esmond turned round with a start and a blush, as he met his

mistress's clear eyes. He had forgotten her, rapt in admiration of the *filia pulchrior*.

"Right foot forward, toe turned out, so: now drop the curtsey, and show the red stockings, Trix. They've silver clocks, Harry. The Dowager sent 'em. She went to put 'em on," cries my Lord.

"Hush, you stupid child!" says miss, smothering her brother with kisses; and then she must come and kiss her mamma, looking all the while at Harry, over his mistress's shoulder. And if she did not kiss him, she gave him both her hands, and said, "O Harry, we're so, so glad you're come!"

THE SETTING

In ninety-five cases in a hundred we read a novel or go to see a play for the story or the characters, but setting is nevertheless an important secondary element which has become a major one in certain cases—especially in the great Wessex novels of Thomas Hardy and in American local color short stories. The primary functions of the setting are to give an air of actuality to the action and make it effective and to bring the characters into relief by placing them in an appropriate background. Stevenson wrote "The Merry Men" in an effort to express the spirit of a certain place. "There is a fitness in events and places," he explains in "A Gossip on Romance," ". . . one place suggests work, another idleness, a third early rising and long rambles in the dew. . . . Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck.

Other spots again seem to abide their destiny, suggestive and impenetrable." The modern emphasis upon setting is due partly to the influence of science, which has stressed the tremendous importance of environment. In *Middlemarch* George Eliot is careful to show us the influence of provincial life upon Lydgate, the young doctor, who moves into the village, and loses all his high ideals as he becomes entangled in domestic and village broils.

There are several different kinds of setting beside the geographical. The background of a novel may be historical, as in Scott's *Kenilworth*. It may deal with a certain social class, like Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*. Or it may deal with professional life, like Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith*, the story of a physician.

A study of Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* reveals a masterly employment of practically all the uses of setting. In fact, Egdon Heath might well be called the leading character in the story. The old Greek conception of Fate is here embodied in the environment. "The untamable, Ishmaelitish thing that Egdon now was it always had been. Civilization was its enemy." "The face of the heath by its mere complexion added half an hour to evening; it could in like manner retard the dawn, sadden noon, anticipate the frowning of storms scarcely generated, and intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking and dread."

It is in this environment that Hardy places the beautiful Eustacia Vye, who might have been happy in Paris; and the Heath is her doom. "The subtle beauties of the heath were lost to Eustacia; she only caught its vapors. An environment which would have made a contented woman a poet, a suffering woman a devotee, a pious woman a psalmist, even a giddy woman thoughtful, made a rebellious woman saturnine." She falls in love with Clym Yeobright, a native of the Heath who has returned from Paris because he can be happy nowhere else. Eustacia asks herself, "What *could* the tastes of that man be who saw friendliness and geniality in these shaggy hills?" Clym loves the Heath. "If any one knew the heath well, it was Clym. He was permeated with its scenes, with its substance, and with its odors. He might be said to be its product. His eyes had first opened thereon; with its appearance all the first images of his memory were mingled; his estimate of life had been colored by it. . . . Take all the varying hates felt by Eustacia Vye towards the heath, and translate them into loves, and you have the heart of Clym." "I cannot endure the heath," says Eustacia, "except in the purple season. The heath is a cruel taskmaster to me." "Can you say so?" replies Clym. "To my mind it is most exhilarating, and strengthening, and soothing. I would rather live on these hills than anywhere else in the world."

Clym and Eustacia marry, but their happiness does

not endure long. In a desperate desire to get away from the Heath and a husband who she thinks loves her no longer, she plans to run away with Wildeve and is drowned in the weir on a stormy night, which Hardy thus describes: "The moon and stars were closed up by cloud and rain to the degree of extinction. It was a night which led the traveler's thoughts instinctively to dwell on nocturnal scenes of disaster in the chronicles of the world, on all that is terrible and dark in history and legend—the last plague of Egypt, the destruction of Sennacherib's host, the agony in Gethsemane."

Everywhere the setting harmonizes with the action, throws the characters into relief, creates the proper mood for the action. One who has read the novel can never forget Mrs. Yeobright journeying across the Heath on a hot summer day, Wildeve and Venn gambling by the light of glowworms, Eustacia standing by her bonfire, or, the final scene of all, Clym preaching on Rainbarrow. No other novel handles so skilfully the spirit of place.

V. LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

Most reading, I am convinced, is unphilosophical.

ARNOLD BENNETT.

All literature, from Job and Omar Khayyám to Thomas Carlyle or Walt Whitman, is but an attempt to look upon the human state with such largeness of view as shall enable us to rise from the consideration of living to the definition of Life.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

One reads a great book partly at least because its author saw more deeply into the meaning of life than we see. Every writer has his own vision of life; he sees what his temperament and his experience permit him to see. If he has a message for us, this is its basis. When we read a book, we are for the time being looking at life through the author's eyes. If we are reading Hardy's *The Return of the Native*, we feel something of his profound pity for unhappy men and women, and we can no longer, Polyanna-like, ignore the dark side of life which he so clearly sees. One cannot read or see one of Bernard Shaw's brilliant comedies without sharing something of the author's scorn for stupidity and sham. We cannot read Emerson without some response to his appeal to the spirit of self-reliance

or Wordsworth without seeing more in nature than we have seen before.

The philosophical approach to literature—too often neglected—has great advantages if we do not press it too far, for philosophy and literature have much in common. "The vision of philosophy is sublime," says George Santayana. "The order it reveals in the world is something beautiful, tragic, sympathetic to the mind, and just what every poet, on a small or on a large scale, is always trying to catch. In philosophy itself investigation and reasoning are only preparatory and servile parts, means to an end. They terminate in insight. . . . A philosopher who attains it is, for the moment, a poet; and a poet who turns his practised and passionate imagination on the order of all things, or on anything in the light of the whole, is for that moment a philosopher."

Although both literature and philosophy attempt to tell us the meaning of life, they approach the problem by different paths. The philosopher's approach is through the reason, and his conclusions are stated in abstract terms. The novelist and the dramatist show us life in concrete form, selecting what seems to them significant. The poet and the philosopher are at opposite poles in their methods of discovering the meaning of life, but they often reach conclusions that are almost identical. The poet tells us what he perceives and feels; his method is intuitive, not rational. Emerson, whose

attitude both in poetry and in prose was that of a poet, replied to a critic of his "Divinity School Address":

I could not possibly give you one of the "arguments" you cruelly hint at, on which any doctrine of mine stands. For I do not know what arguments mean in reference to any expression of a thought. I delight in telling what I think, but if you ask how I dare say so, or why it is so, I am the most helpless of mortal men. I do not even see that either of these questions admits of an answer. . . . I shall go on, just as before, seeing whatever I can, and telling what I see; and, I suppose, with the same fortune that has hitherto attended me,—the joy of finding that my abler and better brothers, who work with the sympathy of society, loving and beloved, do now and then unexpectedly confirm my perceptions, and find my nonsense is only their own thought in motley.

Even though he can give no rational explanation of what he feels, the poet may be a safer guide than the philosopher or the theologian, who too often merely rationalize their own temperamental prejudices. The poet speaks from intuition and experience. Plato, a great philosopher and himself something of a poet, recognized the value of the poet's intuition when he said, "Poets utter great and wise things which they do not understand." It would take a philosopher or a theologian to find rational grounds for the belief which Wordsworth, who had "The Vision and the Faculty Divine," expressed in the following experience which he had in the Simplon Pass in the Alps:

Brook and road

Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy Pass,
And with them did we journey several hours
At a slow step. The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
And in the narrow rent, at every turn,
Winds thwarting winds bewildered and forlorn,
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close about our ears,
Black, drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

Although no two men hold identically the same view of life, it is possible to indicate certain classes into which their various points of view fall. The history of literature, like the history of philosophy, reveals certain attitudes which are as common today as they were in the time of the ancient Greeks, who first gave them systematic expression. These dominant conceptions of life are discussed in Will Durant's *The Story of Philosophy* and in William DeWitt Hyde's *The Five Great Philosophies of Life*. Hyde's five great philosophies are "the Epicurean pursuit of pleasure, genial but

ungenerous; the Stoic law of self-control, strenuous but forbidding; the Platonic plan of subordination, sublime but ascetic; the Aristotelian sense of proportion, practical but uninspiring; and the Christian Spirit of Love, broadest and deepest of them all." Observation of the men and women we know enables us to classify them roughly according to the ruling principles of their lives, but a little study of philosophy makes the task much simpler. Let us briefly examine the first two of these attitudes toward life.

THE EPICUREAN

Epicurus taught the doctrine that pleasure is the object for which we should live, but he did not interpret the pursuit of pleasure in the ignoble fashion of some of his followers. "By pleasure," he said, "we mean the absence of pain in the body and trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking feasts and of revelry, not the enjoyments of the fish and other delicacies of a splendid table, which produce a pleasant life: it is sober reasoning, searching out the reasons for every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which great tumults take possession of the soul." The chief Epicurean virtue is prudence. I quote Dr. Hyde's picture of a worthy Epicurean's day:

After a night of sleep too sound to harbour an unpleasant dream, he greets the hour of rising with a shout and bound, plunges into the bath, meets with gusto the shock it gives, and

rejoices in the glow of exhilaration a vigorous rubbing brings; greets the household "with morning face and morning heart," eager to share with the family the meal, the news, the outlook on the day . . . then, whether work calls him forth immediately or not, takes a few minutes of brisk walking and deep breathing in the open air until he feels the great forces of earth, air, and sunshine pulsing in his veins; then greets the work of kitchen or factory, office or field, schoolroom or counter, bench or desk with an inward cheer, as something to put forth his surplus energy upon; and through the swift, precious forenoon hours delights in the mastery over difficulty his stored-up power imparts; takes the noon-day meal gayly and leisurely with congenial people; through the early afternoon hours does the lighter portion of the day's work if he must; gets out for an hour or two in the open air if he may, with horse, or wheel, or automobile, or boat, or racket, or golf clubs, or skates, or rod, or gun, or at least a friend and two stout walking shoes; comes to the evening meal in the family circle widened to include a few welcome guests, or at the home of some hospitable host, in garments from which all trace of stain or hint of strain has been removed, to share the best things market and purse afford, served in such wise as to prolong the opportunity for the interchange of wit and banter, cursory discussion and kindly compliment; spends the evening in quiet reading or public entertainment, games with his children or visiting with friends; and then returns again to sleep with such a sense of gratitude for the dear joys of the day as sends an echo of "All's well" down through even the shadowy substance of his unconscious dreams. Surely there are some features of this Epicurean day which we, in our bustling, restless, overelaborated lives, might introduce with great profit to ourselves, and great advantage to the people with whom we are intimately thrown.

Children are all Epicureans, and so are most young men and women who have not had many sorrows or

responsibilities. The romancer and the poet serve a very useful purpose when they remind us of the many innocent pleasures we miss in our ambition to achieve success or in our worries over difficulties. Do we not all envy the man who has a gusto for purely physical pleasures such as are suggested in Browning's "Saul"?

Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! No spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver
shock

Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust
divine,

And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of
wine,

And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!

The worthy Epicurean loves the beautiful wherever he finds it, in art and literature as well as in more material things. No one has expressed the love of the beautiful more aptly than Keats in the Proem to *Endymion*:

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep

Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth.
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season; the mid-forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read:
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

But Epicureanism, unless it is modified by some other attitude toward life, is essentially selfish. "The trouble with Epicureanism," says Dr. Hyde, "is its assumption that the self is a bundle of natural appetites and passions, and that the end of life is their gratification. Experience shows . . . that such a policy consistently pursued, brings not pleasure but pain—pain first of all to others, and then pain to the individual through their contempt, indignation, and vengeance." Some pleasures come more often when we do not seek them directly, as by-products of congenial work, for example.

Pure Epicureanism leads to pessimism, cynicism, disillusion. The man who cares for nothing but physical pleasures becomes unhappy because he cannot gratify them, or by and by finds his senses dulling and life hardly worth the living. "God defend me," wrote Emerson in his Journal, "from ever looking at a man as an animal." The Epicurean pursuit of pleasure expressed in the motto, "Eat, drink, and be merry," has as its sequel, "for tomorrow we die." Death is sadder to the Epicurean than to any other, for it means the end of pleasure. The Epicurean view, with its pessimistic implications, has nowhere been more beautifully expressed than in Edward Fitzgerald's paraphrase of a Persian poem, "The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám," from which the following stanzas are taken:

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing. . . .

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

Some for the Glories of This World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum! . . .

Ah, my Belovèd, fill the Cup that clears
To-DAY of past Regrets and future fears:
 To-morrow!—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.

For some we loved, the loveliest and best
That from his Vintage rolling Time hath prest,
 Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to rest.

And we that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new bloom,
 Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
Descend—ourselves to make a couch—for whom? . . .

We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
 Round with the Sun-illuminèd Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show;

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days;
 Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

The Ball no question makes of Ayes or Noes,
But Here or There as strikes the Player goes;
 And He that toss'd you down into the Field,
He knows about it all—*HE* knows—*HE* knows!

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your tears wash out one word of it. . . .

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain!

And when like her, oh Sákí, you shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,
And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass!

THE STOIC

The problem of the Epicurean is how to get the greatest pleasure out of his brief life; but the Stoic, looking at another side of life, finds that the great problem is how to endure pain and other evils. What he desires is a philosophy which can, in Milton's words,

charm
Pain for a while or anguish, and excite
. . . hope, or arm the obdurèd breast
With stubborn patience as with triple steel.

His ideal is self-control, and his highest virtue is fortitude. To him the important thing in life is not wealth, success, or social position. These things are not essential to one's happiness, for external matters can affect us only when we permit them to disturb our serenity of mind. Whatever happens, the Stoic would say with Henley in "Invictus":

I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

Hamlet remarks to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, "Denmark's a prison"; and when they protest, he says, "Why, then 'tis none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me it is a prison." Except for his belief in the existence of matter, the Stoic's position is close to that of Christian Science. The Stoic is something of a fatalist. Like the scientist, he has a great reverence for law. What he asks of Nature is that it be consistent so that he may know what to expect. The law of gravitation may work hardship in an occasional instance, but it is a beneficent law, and we know that it never fails.

The Stoic philosophy, says Dr. Hyde, is less attractive to women than to men and to young men than to old men, who know that a large part of every life is the endurance of evils. The elderly Stoic may well have been an Epicurean who with the passing of years has learned to distrust his senses and his emotions. Something of this change in attitude is seen in Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty," from which the following stanzas are taken:

There are who ask not if thine eye
Be on them; who, in love and truth,
Where no misgiving is, rely
Upon the genial sense of youth:
Glad Hearts! without reproach or blot
Who do thy work, and know it not:
Oh! if through confidence misplaced
They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power! around them cast. . . .

I, loving freedom, and untried,
No sport of every random gust,
Yet being to myself a guide,
Too blindly have reposed my trust:
And oft, when in my heart was heard
Thy timely mandate, I deferred
The task, in smoother walks to stray;
But thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may.

The Stoic's view of life has never been more nobly expressed than in the *Meditations* of the Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius:

Every hour resolve sturdily, like a Roman and a man, to do the work in hand with true and unaffected dignity, kindness, freedom, and justice; and to disengage your mind from other disturbing thoughts. . . .

Act, speak, and think as one who knows that he can at any moment depart from life. . . . Now, death and life, good and evil repute, pain and pleasure, riches and poverty, all these come to the good and the bad alike; but they are intrinsically neither ennobling nor degrading. They are, therefore, neither good nor evil. . . .

The lifetime of man is but a point; his being a flux; his perceptions faint and dull; his physical organism corruptible; his soul a vortex; his destiny inscrutable; and his fame uncertain. In brief, his bodily existence is an ever-flowing stream; that of his soul, a dream and a vapor. His life is a warfare and a sojourn in a strange land, and his after-fame oblivion.

What, then, can be our guide? Philosophy alone. And this consists in keeping the divinity within us inviolate; superior to pleasures and pains; free from inconsiderateness in action, and insincerity and hypocrisy; independent of what others may do or leave undone; accepting cheerfully whatever befalls or is appointed, as coming from the same source as himself; and,

above all, awaiting death with a serene mind, as the natural dissolution of the elements of which every animal is compounded.

And if for the elements there is nothing terrible in the continual change from one form to another, why should one dread the transformation and dissolution of the whole? It is natural, and nothing natural can be evil.

A strikingly similar view is expressed in Bryant's "Thanatopsis," which concludes:

So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

No one has expressed the Stoic point of view more powerfully than John Milton, whose life admirably illustrates the Stoic virtues of fortitude and self-control. There is more of Christian resignation in the sonnets on his blindness than in the following passage from *Paradise Lost*, in which Satan meets disaster and pain with Stoic fortitude:

"Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,"
Said then the lost Archangel, "this the seat
That we must change for Heaven?—this mournful gloom
For that celestial light? Be it so, since He
Who now is sovran can dispose and bid

What shall be right: farthest from Him is best,
 Whom reason hath equalled, force hath made supreme
 Above his equals. Farewell, happy fields,
 Where joy for ever dwells! Hail, horrors! hail,
 Infernal World! and thou, profoundest Hell,
 Receive thy new possessor—one who brings
 A mind not to be changed by place or time.
 The mind is its own place, and in itself
 Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.
 What matter where, if I be still the same,
 And what I should be, all but less than He
 Whom thunder hath made greater?"

In one of the plays of the Roman philosopher, Seneca, the pilot of a ship in a storm prays to the god of the sea, "Oh, Neptune, you may save me if you will; you may sink me if you will; but whatever happens, I shall keep my rudder true." The same Stoic attitude reappears in a similar situation in John Hay's Pike County ballad of "Jim Bludso," the engineer of the *Prairie Belle*.

And this was all the religion he had,—
 To treat his engine well;
 Never be passed on the river;
 To mind the pilot's bell;
 And if ever the *Prairie Belle* took fire—
 A thousand times he swore
 He'd hold her nozzle agin the bank
 Till the last soul got ashore.

Finally the boat catches on fire.

There was runnin' and cursin', but Jim yelled out,
 Over all the infernal roar,

"I'll hold her nozzle agin the bank
Till the last galoot's ashore."

Through the hot, black breath of the burnin' boat
Jim Bludso's voice was heard,
And they all had trust in his cussedness,
And knowed he would keep his word.
And, sure's you're born, they all got off
Afore the smokestacks fell,—
And Bludso's ghost went up alone
In the smoke of the Prairie Belle.

There is a good deal of the Stoic in Matthew Arnold. In *Culture and Anarchy*, from which the following extract is taken, he combats the current notion that the greatness of England consists in her material possessions, somewhat as did Kipling later in his famous "Recessional":

Faith in machinery is, I said, our besetting danger. . . . What is freedom but machinery? what is population but machinery? what is coal but machinery? what are railroads but machinery? what is wealth but machinery? what are, even, religious organisations but machinery? . . . Our coal, thousands of people were saying, is the real basis of our national greatness; if our coal runs short, there is an end of the greatness of England. But what *is* greatness?—culture makes us ask. Greatness is a spiritual condition worthy to excite love, interest, and admiration; and the outward proof of possessing greatness is that we excite love, interest, and admiration. If England were swallowed up by the sea to-morrow, which of the two, a hundred years hence, would most excite the love, interest, and admiration of mankind,—would most, therefore, show the evidences of having possessed greatness,—the England of the

last twenty years, or the England of Elizabeth, of a time of splendid spiritual effort, but when our coal, and our industrial operations depending on coal, were very little developed? Well, then, what an unsound habit of mind it must be which makes us talk of things like coal or iron as constituting the greatness of England, and how salutary a friend is culture, bent on seeing things as they are, and thus dissipating delusions of this kind and fixing standards of perfection that are real!

One more example of Stoicism in literature, the best and the last. The parting of Hector and his wife, Andromache, which is described in the sixth book of the *Iliad*, is not surpassed in all literature. Hector has left the battlefield and gone to the city to have a sacrifice offered to Minerva, hoping that this may turn the tide of battle in favor of the Trojans. He is about to go back to the battlefield when he meets Andromache. I quote from the Lang, Leaf, and Myers translation:

When he had passed through the great city and was come to the Skaian gates, whereby he was minded to issue upon the plain, then came his dear-won wife, running to meet him, even Andromache, daughter of great-hearted Eëtion. . . . So she met him now, and with her went the handmaid bearing in her bosom the tender boy, the little child, Hector's loved son, like unto a beautiful star. Him Hector called Skamandrios, but all the folk Astyanax; for only Hector guarded Ilios. So now he smiled and gazed at his boy silently, and Andromache stood by his side weeping, and clasped her hand in his, and spake and called upon his name. "Dear my lord, this thy hardihood will undo thee, neither hast thou any pity for thine infant boy, nor for me forlorn that soon shall be thy widow; for soon will the Achaians all set upon thee and slay thee. But it were better

for me to go down to the grave if I lose thee; for never more will any comfort be mine, when once thou, even thou, hast met thy fate, but only sorrow. . . . Nay, Hector, thou art to me father and lady mother, yea and brother, even as thou art my goodly husband. Come now, have pity and abide here upon the tower, lest thou make thy child an orphan and thy wife a widow. . . .”

Then great Hector of the glancing helm answered her: “Surely I take thought for all these things, my wife; but I have very sore shame of the Trojans and Trojan dames with trailing robes, if like a coward I shrink away from battle. Moreover mine own soul forbiddeth me, seeing I have learnt ever to be valiant and fight in the forefront of the Trojans, winning my father’s great glory and mine own. Yea of a surety I know this in heart and soul; the day shall come for holy Ilios to be laid low, and Priam and the folk of Priam of the good ashen spear. Yet doth the anguish of the Trojans hereafter not so much trouble me, neither Hekabe’s own, neither king Priam’s neither my brethren’s, the many and brave that shall fall in the dust before their foemen, as doth thine anguish in the day when some mail-clad Achaian shall lead thee weeping and rob thee of the light of freedom. So shalt thou abide in Argos and ply the loom at another woman’s bidding, and bear water from fount Messeis or Hypereia, being grievously entreated, and sore constraint shall be laid upon thee. And then shall one say that beholdeth thee weep: ‘This is the wife of Hector, that was foremost in battle of the horse-taming Trojans when men fought about Ilios.’ Thus shall one say hereafter, and fresh grief will be thine for lack of such an husband as thou hadst to ward off the day of thralldom. But me in death may the heaped-up earth be covering ere I hear thy crying and thy carrying into captivity. . . .”

So spake he, and laid his son in his dear wife’s arms; and she took him to her fragrant bosom, smiling tearfully. And her husband had pity to see her, and caressed her with his hand,

and spake and called upon her name: "Dear one, I pray thee be not of oversorrowful heart; no man against my fate shall hurl me to Hades; only destiny, I ween, no man hath escaped, be he coward or be he valiant, when once he hath been born. But go thou to thine house and see to thine own tasks, the loom and the distaff, and bid thine handmaidens ply their work; but for war shall men provide, and I in chief of all men that dwell in Ilios."

So spake glorious Hector, and took up his horse-hair crested helmet; and his dear wife departed to her home, oft looking back, and letting fall big tears. Anon she came to the well-stablished house of man-slaying Hector, and found therein her many handmaidens, and stirred lamentation in them all. So bewailed they Hector, while yet he lived, within his house: for they deemed that he would no more come back to them from battle, nor escape the fury of the hands of the Achaians.

It would take too much space to discuss in detail the finer and more complex philosophy of Plato, or Aristotle, or any of the great moderns. I have indicated a method of study which I hope the reader will follow up. I shall give the remainder of this chapter to a brief discussion of various types of optimism and pessimism, both of which play a large part in literature.

OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM

Strictly speaking, pessimism and optimism are not philosophies at all, for the Epicurean, the Stoic, and the Platonist may be optimists or pessimists, depending upon which side of their philosophy they emphasize. Nor is it easy to classify men as optimists or pessimists;

most men are optimists on some subjects and on some occasions. It is sometimes easier to classify books in this way than men. "Books say Yes to life," says Carl Sandburg. "Or they say No." The two attitudes toward life are finely suggested in Keats's "Sleep and Poetry":

Stop and consider! life is but a day:
A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way
From a tree's summit; a poor Indian's sleep
While his boat hastens to the steep
Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan?
Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown;
The reading of an ever-changing tale;
The light uplifting of a maiden's veil;
A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air;
A laughing school-boy, without grief or care
Riding the springy branches of an elm.

Both the pessimist and the optimist may serve us by calling our attention to things we have persistently overlooked; and each, alas, may appeal to the weaker side of our nature. One cannot afford to yield to an unhealthy despair or to a shallow, Polyanna-like belief that "whatever is, is right." In Granville Barker's play, *The Madras House*, the following dialogue takes place between Philip Madras and his wife:

Philip. . . . Have you ever really looked at a London street. . . . walked slowly up and down it three times . . . carefully testing it with every cultured sense?

Jessica. Yes . . . it's loathsome.

Philip. Then what have you done?

Jessica. What can one do?

Philip. Come home to play a sonata of Beethoven! Does that drown the sights and the sounds and the smell of it?

Jessica. Yes . . . it does.

Philip (in fierce revolt). Not to me . . . my God . . . not to me!

Jessica (gently bitter). For so many women, Phil, art has to make life possible.

Many of us rarely face the problem of evil and suffering; we ignore it. Emerson, who was an optimist, tried to solve the problem in this manner in his "Divinity School Address":

Good is positive. Evil is merely privative, not absolute: it is like cold, which is the privation of heat. All evil is so much death or nonentity. Benevolence is absolute and real.

Schopenhauer, answering this very argument, as advanced by Leibnitz, says:

Unless suffering is the direct and immediate object of life, our existence must entirely fail of its aim. It is absurd to look upon the enormous amount of pain that abounds everywhere in the world, and originates in needs and necessities inseparable from life itself, as serving no purpose at all and the result of mere chance. Each separate misfortune, as it comes, seems, no doubt, to be something exceptional; but misfortune in general is the rule.

I know of no greater absurdity than that propounded by most systems of philosophy in declaring evil to be negative in its character. Evil is just what is positive; it makes its own existence felt. . . . It is the good which is negative: in other words, happiness and satisfaction always imply some desire fulfilled, some state of pain brought to an end. . . .

The pleasure in this world, it has been said, outweighs the

pain; or, at any rate, there is an even balance between the two. If the reader wishes to see shortly whether this statement is true, let him compare the respective feelings of two animals, one of which is engaged in eating the other.

Even the optimistic Emerson could on occasion talk like a pessimist. In the essay on "Self-reliance" he explains "the law of compensation" and pricks the contemporary notion of "progress":

Society never advances. It recedes as fast on one side as it gains on the other. It undergoes continual changes; it is barbarous, it is civilized, it is christianized, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For everything that is given something is taken. Society acquires new arts and loses old instincts. . . .

The civilized man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet. He is supported on crutches, but lacks so much support of muscle. He has a fine Geneva watch, but he fails of the skill to tell the hour by the sun. A Greenwich nautical almanac he has, and so being sure of the information when he wants it, the man in the street does not know a star in the sky. The solstice he does not observe; the equinox he knows as little; and the whole bright calendar of the year is without a dial in his mind. His note-books impair his memory; his libraries overload his wit; the insurance-office increases the number of accidents; and it may be a question whether machinery does not encumber; whether we have not lost by refinement some energy, by a Christianity entrenched in establishments and forms, some vigor of wild virtue. . . .

Society is a wave. The wave moves onward, but the water of which it is composed does not. The same particle does not rise from the valley to the ridge. Its unity is only phenomenal. The persons who make up a nation to-day, next year die, and their experience dies with them.

One who is no pessimist may for the time being find himself sympathizing with the point of view of such a pessimist as Thomas Hardy; it is thus that William Lyon Phelps comments on Hardy's point of view:

Mr. Hardy's pessimism is a picturesque and splendid contribution to modern fiction. We should be as grateful for it in this field as we are to Schopenhauer in the domain of metaphysics. I am no pessimist myself, but I had rather read Schopenhauer than all the rest of the philosophers put together, Plato alone excepted. The pessimism of Mr. Hardy resembles that of Schopenhauer in being absolutely thorough and absolutely candid; it makes the world as darkly superb and as terribly interesting as a Greek drama. It is wholly worth while to get this point of view; and if in practical life one does not really believe in it, it is capable of yielding much pleasure. After finishing one of Mr. Hardy's novels, one has all the delight of waking from an impressive but horrible dream, and feeling through the dissolving vision the real friendliness of the good old earth. It is like coming home from an adequate performance of *King Lear*, which we would not have missed for anything. There are so many make-believe pessimists, so many whose pessimism is a sham and a pose . . . that we cannot withhold admiration for such pessimism as Mr. Hardy's, which is fundamental and sincere. . . .

Mr. Hardy's pessimism is not in the least personal, nor has it risen from any sorrow or disappointment in his own life. It is both philosophic and temperamental. He cannot see nature in any other way. To venture a guess, I think his pessimism is mainly caused by his deep, manly tenderness for all forms of human and animal life and by an almost abnormal sympathy. . . . As a spectator of human history, he sees life as a vast tragedy, with men and women emerging from nothingness, suffering acute physical and mental sorrow, and then passing into nothingness again. To his sympathetic mind, the creed of

optimism is a ribald insult to the pain of humanity and devout piety merely absurd.

One of the most moving expressions of pessimism is found in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Macbeth's evil career is near a close. He has just been informed of the death of the queen.

She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

It is as easy to be a facile pessimist as a shallow optimist. A man who suffers, like Carlyle, from poor digestion and eye-strain, may unconsciously ascribe to "God and nature his own fits of the blues," as Lowell accused Carlyle of doing. The pessimist will do well also to remember Mark Twain's comment: "What a man sees in the human race is merely himself in the deep and honest privacy of his own heart. Byron despised the race because he despised himself. I feel as Byron did, and for the same reason."

The optimism of youth has never been more beauti-

fully described than in Wordsworth's "French Revolution, as it Appeared to Enthusiasts at its Commencement":

Oh! pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, we who were strong in love!
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!—Oh! times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
When most intent on making of herself
A prime Enchantress—to assist the work,
Which then was going forward in her name!
Not favoured spots alone, but the whole earth,
The beauty wore of promise, that which sets
(As at some moment might not be unfelt
Among the bowers of paradise itself)
The budding rose above the rose full blown.
What temper at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,
The playfellows of fancy, who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength
Their ministers,—who in lordly wise had stirred
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
And dealt with whatsoever they found there
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it;—they, too, who, of gentle mood,
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,
And in the region of their peaceful selves;—

Now was it that both found, the meek and lofty
Did both find, helpers to their heart's desire,
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish;
Were called upon to exercise their skill,
Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us,—the place where in the end
We find our happiness, or not at all!

Some men are fortunate enough to retain even in old age the cheerful outlook upon life which they held in youth. Browning and Whitman are conspicuous examples. Browning's optimism, I suspect, was due not so much to any philosophic views he held as to his robust, healthy physical nature. It is finely expressed in Pippa's song, which ends,

God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

in "Prospice," "Rabbi ben Ezra," and the Epilogue to *Asolando*, the conclusion of which I give:

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,

"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed,—fight on, fare ever
There as here!"

Emerson's optimism is derived logically from his belief in self-reliance and the Over-Soul, both of which are evident in the conclusion of "The American Scholar":

Mr. President and gentlemen, this confidence in the unsearched might of man belongs, by all motives, by all prophecy, by all preparation, to the American Scholar. We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. The spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame. Public and private avarice make the air we breathe thick and fat. The scholar is decent, indolent, complaisant. See already the tragic consequence. The mind of this country, taught to aim at low objects, eats upon itself. There is no work for any but the decorous and the complaisant. Young men of the fairest promise, who begin life upon our shores, inflated by the mountain winds, shined upon by all the stars of God, find the earth below not in unison with these,—but are hindered from action by the disgust which the principles on which business is managed inspire, and turn drudges, or die in disgust,—some of them suicides. What is the remedy? They did not see, and thousands of young men as hopeful now crowding to the barriers for the career, do not yet see, that, if the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him. Patience,—patience;—with the shadow of all the good and great for company; and for solace, the perspective of your own infinite life; and for work, the study and the communication of principles, the making those instincts prevalent, the conversion of the world. Is it not the chief disgrace in the world, not to be an unit;—not to be reckoned one character;—not to yield that peculiar fruit which each man was created to bear, but to be

reckoned in the gross, in the hundred or the thousand, of the party, the section, to which we belong; and our opinion predicted geographically, as the north, or the south? Not so, brothers, and friends,—please God, ours shall not be so. We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our hands; we will speak our minds. The study of letters shall be no longer a name for pity, for doubt, and for sensual indulgence. The dread of man and the love of man shall be a wall of defence and a wreath of joy around all. A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men.

Walt Whitman's optimism shows the influence of Emerson, but it is thoroughly native to the man none the less. The following lines from his "Song of the Open Road" were written in early manhood, but Whitman carried his serene optimism through an invalid old age:

In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barley-corn less,
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.

I know I am solid and sound,
To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow,
All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means.

I know I am deathless,
I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by a carpenter's compass,
I know I shall not pass like a child's carlacue cut with a burnt stick at night.

I know I am august,
 I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be understood,
 I see that the elementary laws never apologize,
 (I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I plant my house
 by, after all.)

I exist as I am, that is enough,
 If no other in the world be aware I sit content,
 And if each and all be aware I sit content.

One world is aware and by far the largest to me, and that is
 myself,
 And whether I come to my own to-day or in ten thousand or
 ten million years,
 I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness I can
 wait.

My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite,
 I laugh at what you call dissolution,
 And I know the amplitude of time.

Whitman, says Stevenson, "sees that, if the poet is
 to be of any help, he must testify to the livableness of
 life." He quotes with approval the following prose
 passage from Whitman:

This is what you shall do: love the earth, and sun, and ani-
 mals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up
 for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others,
 hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and in-
 dulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing
 known or unknown, or to any man or number of men; go freely
 with powerful uneducated persons, and with the young, and
 mothers of families, read these leaves [*Leaves of Grass*] in the
 open air every season of every year of your life; re-examine all

you have been told at school or church, or in any book, and dismiss whatever insults your own soul.

Stevenson himself, an invalid practically his whole life, is one of the most stimulating of optimists. He had no patience with what Whitman called "the literature of woe," but preached the duty of happiness. The following extract is taken from "An Apology for Idlers:"

There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy. By being happy, we sow anonymous benefits upon the world, which remain unknown even to ourselves, or when they are disclosed, surprise nobody so much as the benefactor. The other day, a ragged, barefoot boy ran down the street after a marble, with so jolly an air that he set every one he passed into a good-humor; one of these persons, who had been delivered from more than usually black thoughts, stopped the little fellow and gave him some money with this remark: "You see what sometimes comes of looking pleased." If he had looked pleased before, he had now to look both pleased and mystified. For my part, I justify this encouragement of smiling rather than tearful children; I do not wish to pay for tears anywhere but upon the stage; but I am prepared to deal largely in the opposite commodity. A happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five-pound note. He or she is a radiating focus of good-will; and their entrance into a room is as though another candle had been lighted. We need not care whether they could prove the forty-seventh proposition; they do a better thing than that, they practically demonstrate the great Theorem of the Livableness of Life.

Wisely, I think, most of us prefer the creed of the optimist, but we should not forget that the pessimist

has an indispensable place in life and in literature. We need to look occasionally at the darker side of life which most of us are prone to ignore. In literature the great masterpieces belong to tragedy rather than to comedy or romance. Shakespeare's tragedies are greater than his comedies. It was of the great tragedies that Matthew Arnold was thinking when he wrote in his sonnet, "Shakespeare:"

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

Finally, both optimist and pessimist, Epicurean, Stoic, Platonist, and Aristotelian would all do well to remember Schopenhauer's wise saying, "Life is neither to be wept over, nor to be laughed at, but to be understood," and this from George Santayana: "The final victory of a single philosophy is not yet won, because none as yet has proved adequate to all experience." I bring this chapter to a close with an admirable expression of what we may call the Christian philosophy by Walt Whitman:

THE BASE OF ALL METAPHYSICS

And now gentlemen,
A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,
As base and final too for all metaphysics.

(So to the students the old professor
At the close of his crowded course.)

Having studied the new and antique, the Greek and Germanic
systems,
Kant having studied and stated, Fichte and Schelling and
Hegel,
Stated the lore of Plato, and Socrates greater than Plato,
And greater than Socrates sought and stated, Christ divine
having studied long,
I see reminiscent to-day those Greek and Germanic systems,
See the philosophies all, Christian churches and tenets see,
Yet underneath Socrates clearly see, and underneath Christ the
divine I see,
The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of friend
to friend,
Of the well-married husband and wife, of children and parents,
Of city for city and land for land.

VI. WORDS

Language is but a poor bull's-eye lantern wherewith to show off the vast cathedral of the world; and yet a particular thing once said in words is so definite and memorable, that it makes us forget the absence of the many which remain unexpressed; like a bright window in a distant view, which dazzles and confuses our sight of its surroundings.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Literature is the art of words, and words are its only medium. It cannot appeal directly to the eye, like painting or sculpture, nor can it arouse the emotions so quickly as music. Whether we wish to tell a story, to expound a system of philosophy, or to describe a picnic, our sole medium is words. The limitations of language are most readily seen in description. The painter and the sculptor can place the living object before us, so to speak; but literature can only suggest, or list numerous details which we struggle vainly to visualize. The painter can give us things in their proper proportions which the eye takes in at a glance, but the writer can never be quite sure that his reader sees the object as he sees it.

And yet literature comes closer to most of us than the other arts for two reasons: it deals with a medium with which we are all familiar, and it surpasses all other arts

in its ability to express thought. The motion picture can give us the externals of life far more vividly than can the novel or the drama, but without dialogue it cannot tell us adequately what men and women think or feel.

If we are to profit from our study of literature, then, we must give some attention to the writer's medium—words. A dictionary is indispensable, for a failure to understand one important word in a line from Shakespeare may make the whole passage meaningless. As one idly turns the pages of a dictionary, it is not easy to realize—what is nevertheless true—that here are the materials out of which our English and American literature is made. Here are *Hamlet*, *Middlemarch*, and *Prometheus Unbound*. Here also is the literature of the future, barring the new words which are to come in.

If the individual words seem uninteresting in the dictionary, it is because we do not understand their possibilities. One who wishes to learn to write must cultivate a feeling for the color and individuality of words. "A few words well chosen and well distinguished," said John Ruskin, "will do work that a thousand cannot, when every one is acting, equivocally, in the function of another." (If you do not know the meaning of *equivocally*, you have probably missed Ruskin's full meaning.) While he was living on a Texas ranch, O. Henry always carried a dictionary in his pocket. "Webster's 'Unabridged Dictionary,'" says O. Henry's biographer, C. Alphonso Smith, "was also a constant

companion. He used it not merely as a reference book but as a source of ideas. It became to him in the isolation of ranch life what Herkimer's 'Handbook of Indispensable Information' had been to Sanderson Pratt and 'The Rubaiyat' of Omar Khayyam to Idaho Green in 'The Handbook of Hymen.'" Said Oliver Wendell Holmes:

When I feel inclined to read poetry, I take down my Dictionary. The poetry of words is quite as beautiful as that of sentences. The author may arrange the gems effectively, but their shape and lustre have been given by the attrition of ages. Bring me the finest simile from the whole range of imaginative writing, and I will show you a single word which conveys a more profound, a more accurate, and a more eloquent analogy.

Do you see any magical possibilities in the following simple words: *things, and, battles, ago, unhappy, far-off, old*? Let a great poet like Wordsworth arrange them as he does in "The Solitary Reaper," and these common words reveal a new meaning, fresh color, and unsuspected melody:

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things
And battles long ago.

"Language is fossil poetry," said Emerson. Our commonest words are worn-out figures of speech. *Depend* is "to hang from"; *thrill* is "to bore, to pierce"; a *poll*

tax is "a head tax." The names of flowers and of places reveal a poetic instinct in primitive man: lady's-slipper, forget-me-not, daisy (day's eye, *i. e.*, the sun); Roaring Camp, Poker Flat, San Antonio. But the poetry in words is not always fossil. In the hands of the poet well-worn words take on a new life and color.

It is often helpful to know the derivation of a word. Look up the etymology of *education*, *desultory*, *caprice*, *sanguine*, *criticism*. Look up the derivation of *assiduity*, and you will find a new significance in Irving's description of Rip Van Winkle's "insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labor": "It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble."

One must not leap to the conclusion that the derivation of a word determines its present meaning. It is the usage of the best speakers and writers which determines that point. *Knave* once meant "boy," as *Knabe* still means in German; but its present meaning is quite different. *Nice* derives ultimately from the Latin *nescius*, "ignorant," but the word has shifted through several intermediate stages to its present correct meaning, which is almost lost in popular use today.

Gustave Flaubert, the French novelist, had a theory of "the inevitable word," which is thus explained by his disciple, Guy de Maupassant:

Whatever be the thing one wishes to say, there is only one word to express it, only one verb to animate it, only one adjective to qualify it. It is necessary, then, to search till one has discovered that word, that verb, that adjective, and never to be content with almost finding it, never to have recourse to trickery, never to resort to the buffooneries of language in order to avoid the difficulty.

This is the advice that Flaubert gave the youthful de Maupassant:

“When you pass,” he used to say to me, “before a grocer seated at his door, before a janitor who smokes his pipe, before a stand of coaches, show me this grocer and this janitor, their pose, their whole physical appearance, including also—indicated by the ingenuity of the picture—their whole moral nature, in such fashion that I cannot confuse them with any other grocer, or any other janitor; and make me see, by a single word in what respect one coach horse differs in appearance from fifty others that follow him or precede him.”

CONNOTATION

The proper use of a word does not depend solely upon its exact denotation, for words have certain overtones or suggestions, which we call *connotations*. Through long associations a word acquires a fringe of suggestions which can be made to contribute to, or detract from, the effect which we wish to make upon the reader. These connotations play a large part in poetry and imaginative prose, where the emotional and imaginative color of a word is very important. In the opening sentences of Poe’s “The Fall of the House of

Usher" quoted below, notice that Poe is not content merely to define as accurately as possible the mood of the story; he suggests it in words carefully chosen for their connotative effect:

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain, upon the bleak walls, upon the vacant eye-like windows, upon a few rank sedges, and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium: the bitter lapse into everyday life, the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart, an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime."

Compare this with the opening stanza of Poe's "Ulalume," where a somewhat similar mood is suggested more quickly but less definitely:

The skies they were ashen and sober;
The leaves they were crispèd and sere—
The leaves they were withering and sere;

It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year;
It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
In the misty mid region of Weir—
It was down by the dank tarn of Auber,
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

In the case of the word *immemorial*, Poe probably sacrificed the proper meaning of the word for the sake of the word's connotation and beauty of sound.

In certain types of writing it is desirable to employ, not words rich in connotative qualities, but words with very definite meanings and without equivocal suggestions. The philosopher, the critic, the debater, and above all the scientist search for words with very definite meanings and few or no overtones. The scientist employs a technical vocabulary and devises formulas. H_2O and $x + y$ have no troublesome overtones. Poetry and science are at opposite poles in their use of language. In the following beautiful lines from Keats's *Hyperion*, it is of no importance whether the poet is talking about *quercus robur*, the common British oak, or some other species:

As when, upon a trancèd summer night,
Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmèd by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave;
So came these words and went.

The poet is concerned with appearances, emotions, suggestions, beauty, the relation to life of things, not with exact definitions. His is the attitude of Tennyson in *Maud*:

See what a lovely shell,
Small and pure as a pearl,
Lying close to my foot,
Frail, but a work divine,
Made so fairly well
With delicate spire and whorl,
How exquisitely minute,
A miracle of design!

What is it? a learned man
Could give it a clumsy name.
Let him name it who can,
The beauty would be the same.

It is a matter of little importance to the poet that water is composed of hydrogen and oxygen in the proportion of two to one. To him water has motion, color, warmth or cold; it is inviting, soothing, dangerous, beautiful, sublime. "Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll!" A poet, however, may be tremendously interested in the conclusions of the scientist even though his use of language and his attitude toward life may be different, for both are concerned with the meaning of life.

The study of synonyms and antonyms is a useful means of sharpening one's sense of the differences in words, as to both denotation and connotation. On what occasions, for example, would you use each of the fol-

lowing words: *house, residence, home, edifice, mansion, building, structure*? Try the effect of substituting synonyms in a poem or a story. Note the effect which comes from such substitution in the following well-known stanza of Gray's "Elegy":

The curfew sounds the knell of dying day,
The lowing herd goes slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward takes his weary way,
And leaves the world to twilight and to me.

This is the original:

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

One of the writer's difficulties is that the connotation of each word—and often its denotation—varies with each reader who sees it. In *These Many Years* Brander Matthews gives a striking example. Half a dozen well-known authors are talking in a London club.

Until that evening I had never thought of *forest* as clothing itself in different colors and taking on different forms in the eyes of different men; but I then discovered that even the most innocent word may don strange disguises. To Hardy *forest* suggested the sturdy oaks to be assaulted by the woodlanders of Wessex; and to Du Maurier it evoked the trim and tidy avenues of the national domain of France. To Black the word naturally brought to mind the low scrub of the so-called deer-forests of Scotland; and to Gosse it summoned up a view of the green-clad mountains that towered up from the Scandinavian fiords. To Howells *forest* recalled the thick woods that in his youth

fringed the rivers of Ohio; and to me there came back swiftly the memory of the wild growths, bristling unrestrained by man, in the Chippewa Reservation which I had crossed fourteen years before in my canoe trip from Lake Superior to the Mississippi. Simple as the word seemed, it was interpreted by each of us in accord with his previous personal experience. And these divergent experiences exchanged that evening brought home to me as never before the inherent and inevitable inadequacy of the vocabulary of every language, since there must always be two partners in any communication by means of words, and the verbal currency passing from one to the other has no fixed value necessarily the same to both of them.

What does the word *forest* suggest to you?—To a certain extent the user of a word may make his context help define the sense in which he uses it. In the following uses of the word, does the same picture always come to your mind? It should not.

Far in the forest, dim and old,
For her may some tall vault unfold.

POE: *The Sleeper*.

This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the
hemlocks,
Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the
twilight,
Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic,
Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms.

LONGFELLOW: *Evangeline*.

The night is chill; the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?

COLERIDGE: *Christabel*.

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!

SHELLEY: *Ode to the West Wind*.

If I cannot carry forests on my back,
Neither can you crack a nut.

EMERSON: *Fable*.

Words vary in other ways than those which we have pointed out. They may be abstract or concrete, vague or specific, dignified or colloquial, learned or popular, simple or technical, obsolete, archaic, slangy, etc. In the Notes the student will find suggested certain books which treat the subject at much greater length in an interesting untechnical manner.

Words have social status; at least their use quickly distinguishes those who move in good society from those who do not. "People of position are people of position the world over—" says Emily Post in *Etiquette*, "and by their speech are most readily known. . . . A 'show-girl' may be lovely to look at as she stands in a seemingly unstudied position and in perfect clothes. But let her say 'My Gawd!' or 'Wouldn't that jar you!' and where is her loveliness then?" "But the caricature 'lady' with her comic picture 'society manner' who says 'Pardon *me*' and talks of 'retiring,' and 'residing,' and 'desiring,' and 'being acquainted with,' and 'attending' this and that with 'her escort,' and curls her little finger over the handle of her teacup, and prates of 'culture,' does *not* belong to Best Society, and *never* will! . . .

There is no better way to cultivate taste in words, than by constantly reading the best English. None of the words and expressions which are taboo in good society will be found in books of proved literary standing."

SOUNDS

In literary prose and in poetry the sounds of words are very important, and an ear for rhythm and melody is a great aid to the appreciation of either. In particular, poets and musicians like the liquid consonants, *l, m, n, r*, which readily blend with other consonants. In general, the writer, like the musician, will prefer the long vowels to the short and the open to the close; but the selection depends upon the context. Poe's names for women are musical: Helen, Lenore, Eleanora, Ligeia, Ulalume, Annabel Lee. Rossetti has an interesting list:

Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys;

and Swinburne another:

Faustine, Fragoletta, Dolores,
Félice and Yolande and Juliette.

Place names, too, are often musical. Robert Louis Stevenson thought the names of American states very musical: Oregon, Iowa, Virginia, Carolina, Texas, Arizona, California, Utah, Tennessee, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, New Mexico.

But the writer cannot limit his choice to the sounds

suggested above, which are in the minority; and all our vowel and consonant sounds are beautiful in their proper places. Certain sounds occur more frequently than others. Consonant *y* is not common; long or short *e* is very common. When a writer uses a sound much more often than it normally occurs, the effect becomes noticeable and an impression is made on the reader. The repetition of vowel sounds is called *assonance*, which is by no means limited to rime. Tennyson plays upon long *e* and long *o* in the following lines from "The Lotos-Eaters":

but evermore
Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.

Lord Houghton tells us that "one of Keats's favorite topics of conversation was the principle of melody in verse, which he believed to consist in the adroit management of open and close vowels. He had a theory that vowels could be as skilfully combined and interchanged as differing notes of music and that all sense of monotony was to be avoided except when expressive of a special purpose." The monotonous effect of a failure to vary the vowel sounds is seen in these lines which Sidney Lanier wrote merely to illustrate this very point:

'Tis May-day gay: wide-smiling skies shine bright
Through whose true blue cuckoos do woo anew
The tender spring.

Variation with a purpose is seen in the following lines from Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*; note how the long *o* gives place in the last line to shorter sounds:

Oh, Rome! my country! city of the soul,
The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,
Lone mother of dead empires! and control
In their shut breasts their petty misery.

Consonants may be effectively repeated too. When the repetition comes at the beginning of an accented syllable, it is called *alliteration*; but it may come anywhere, as with the *s*, *sh*, and *z* sounds (all closely related) in the following lines from Milton's *Comus*:

A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And airy tongues that syllable men's names
On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.

Occasionally the poet will suggest by his choice of sounds the meaning which he wishes to convey. *Onomatopoeia*, as this device is called, may be defined by quoting Pope's line, "The sound must seem an echo to the sense." The following line from Vergil suggests the galloping of horses:

Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.

Two passages in Milton's *Paradise Lost* describing the opening of the gates of Hell and of Heaven are excellent examples:

On a sudden open fly
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound
The infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder.

Heaven open'd wide
Her ever during gates, harmonious sound
On golden hinges moving.

J. Middleton Murry praises this selection from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as masterly:

Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not:
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
That if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again, and then in dreaming
The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop on me, that when I wak'd
I cried to dream again.

I borrow two excellent examples in prose from Guy N. Pocock's *Pen and Ink*. The first is from Stevenson: "One of the rocks bounded over the edge of the cliff and went pounding down into the valley." The other is from Melville's *Moby Dick*: "How the wild winds blow it; they whip it about as the torn shreds of sail lash the tossed ship they cling to."

For those interested in the use of sounds in poetry, no poem will repay study more quickly than Poe's "The Bells." The poem is too artificial, too mechanical; the artist has not concealed all traces of his work-

manship. But for this very reason it will yield to the student many of the secrets of verbal melody.

RHYTHM

Rhythm is a characteristic of music and dancing as well as of poetry and literary prose. Rhythm is closely connected with our emotional nature. When we feel deeply, our speech tends to become rhythmical. Rhythm helps to unlock the reader's emotion, much as music helps the spectator to respond to the emotions aroused by a moving picture. Very finely rhythmical is the conclusion of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.

Compare this passage with the following selection from Woodrow Wilson's address to Congress on April 2, 1917, recommending the declaration of war against Germany:

There are, it may be, many months of fiery trial and sacrifice ahead of us. It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the

things which we have always carried nearest our hearts,—for democracy; for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments; for the rights and liberties of small nations; for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free. To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything we are and everything we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.

Stevenson compared the writer of prose to a conjurer juggling with two oranges; he must make the sound harmonize with the sense. The sentence rhythm must run parallel to the development of the thought. The two patterns of sound and sense should fit at all points; or, as Stevenson puts it:

Whatever be the obscurities, whatever the intricacies of the argument [thought], the neatness of the fabric must not suffer, or the artist has been proved unequal to his design. And, on the other hand, no form of words must be selected, no knot must be tied among the phrases, unless knot and word be precisely what is wanted to forward and illuminate the argument; for to fail in this is to swindle in the game. The genius of prose rejects the *cheville* no less emphatically than the laws of verse; and the *cheville*, I should perhaps explain to some of my readers, is any meaningless or very watered phrase employed to strike a balance in the sound. Pattern and argument live in each other; and it is by the brevity, clearness, charm, or emphasis of the second, that we judge the strength and fitness of the first.

Note the relation of sentence structure, sound, and rhythm to the "argument" in the following famous passage from Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*:

It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in,—glittering like the morningstar, full of life and splendor and joy. Oh! what a revolution! and what an heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream, when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom! Little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honor, and of cavaliers! I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever. Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom! The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise, is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honor, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness!

STYLE

The beauty and appropriateness of a fine style are something to be felt rather than analyzed. Indeed, style is no more analyzable than the charm which we vaguely call personal magnetism. We recognize its presence when we find a fresh or profound thought expressed in a manner that seems the inevitable phrasing of the idea in language perfectly appropriate to both the thought and the writer. Definitions of style are all inadequate, and yet to one who loves great writing they may prove suggestive.

"The style is the man himself," said Buffon. "Style," said Schopenhauer, "is the physiognomy of the mind, and a safer index to character than the face." "Proper words in proper places," said Jonathan Swift, "make the true definition of style." "Style is this," said Stendhal: "to add to a given thought all the circumstances fitted to produce the whole effect that the thought ought to produce." The central problem of style, as seen by J. Middleton Murry, is: How shall the writer "compel others to feel the particularity of his emotion"? Wordsworth protested against regarding language as "the *dress* of thoughts"; it is rather, he said, "the *incarnation* of thoughts." "Style," says Arnold Bennett, "cannot be distinguished from matter. When a writer conceives an idea he conceives it in a form of words. That form of words constitutes his style, and it is abso-

lutely governed by the idea. The idea can only exist in words, and it can only exist in one form of words. You cannot say exactly the same thing in two different ways. Slightly alter the expression, and you slightly alter the idea. . . . A writer, having conceived and expressed an idea, may, and probably will, 'polish it up.' But what does he polish up? To say that he polishes up his style is merely to say that he is polishing up his idea, that he has discovered faults or imperfections in his idea, and is perfecting it. An idea exists in proportion as it is expressed; it exists when it is expressed, and not before."

Herbert Spencer was no stylist, but his essay on "The Philosophy of Style" makes a very definite contribution to the theory of style, which is, to quote his own phrase, "the importance of economizing the reader's or hearer's attention":

To so present ideas that they may be apprehended with the least possible mental effort, is the desideratum towards which most of the rules . . . point. When we condemn writing that is wordy, or confused, or intricate—when we praise this style as easy, and blame that as fatiguing, we consciously or unconsciously assume this desideratum as our standard of judgment. Regarding language as an apparatus of symbols for the conveyance of thought, we may say that, as in a mechanical apparatus, the more simple and the better arranged its parts, the greater will be the effect produced.

I shall bring this brief discussion of style to a conclusion by quoting from Woodrow Wilson's "Mere Lit-

erature" an admirable bit of advice to those who wish to write:

It behooves all minor authors to realize the possibility of their being discovered some day, and exposed to the general scrutiny. They ought to live as if conscious of the risk. They ought to purge their hearts of everything that is not genuine and capable of lasting the world a century, at least, if need be. Mere literature is made of spirit. The difficulties of style are the artist's difficulties with his tools. The spirit that is in the eye, in the pose, in mien or gesture, the painter must find in his color-box; as he must find also the spirit that nature displays upon the face of the fields or in the hidden places of the forest. The writer has less obvious means. Word and spirit do not easily consort. The language which the philologists set out before us with such curious erudition is of very little use as a vehicle for the essences of the human spirit. It is too sophisticated and self-conscious. What you need is, not a critical knowledge of language, but a quick feeling for it. You must recognize the affinities between your spirit and its idioms. You must immerse your phrase in your thought, your thought in your phrase, till each becomes saturated with the other. Then what you produce is as necessarily fit for permanency as if it were incarnated spirit.

VII. VERSE

And you must love him [the poet], ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.

WORDSWORTH: *A Poet's Epitaph.*

If verse has any function on the stage, it is that of imparting lyric beauty to passionate speech.

WILLIAM ARCHER.

The reading of verse presents certain difficulties not found in ordinary prose, and for this reason there are many who have never learned to read poetry with understanding and delight. The very appearance of a poem on the printed page makes an unfortunate first impression upon some readers; to their minds it suggests the dull, the obscure, the effeminate, the affected. They have not learned the truth which Hazlitt states so emphatically: "It [poetry] is 'the stuff of which our life is made.' The rest is 'mere oblivion,' a dead letter; for all that is worth remembering in life is the poetry of it." Poetry, as Shelley defined it, is "the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds." Poetry is the record of intensely lived moments, of "the golden instants and bright 'days'" by which Masfield would measure our lives. Whether we care for poetry or not, we prize most highly those

poetic moods in which we see most clearly and feel most keenly the beauty or the sadness of life. As we look back on our past years, what seems to make life most significant is the poetry of it. And poetry can suggest much which prose cannot adequately express.

Disregard the appearance of the printed poem. Read it aloud and learn to feel the music. Rhythm and rime are meant not for the eye but for the ear. If you have difficulty with poetry, begin with poetic prose, which has nothing in its appearance on the page to suggest verse. Excellent examples are Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn-burial*, Lamb's "Dream Children," DeQuincey's "The English Mail-coach," and Emerson's *Essays*. Compare the rhythm of the following sentence, "I cannot think highly of the character of the man who has never been exposed to any kind of temptation," with Milton's expression of the same idea, "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat." In Milton's sentence the two patterns of sound and sense, rhythm and thought, harmonize perfectly; phrase balances phrase without suggesting the regularity of metrical language. Somewhat more regular is the rhythm of the following bit of free verse from Whitman's great tribute to Abraham Lincoln:

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

In poetry, as in prose, the two patterns, sound and sense, must harmonize; but the poet employs a sound pattern which is more complex than that of the prose writer. If the writer of prose, to use Stevenson's figure again, is a juggler who keeps two oranges in the air at once, the poet is the juggler with three or four. The third orange is meter, and the fourth is rime. Remembering that as Stevenson puts it, "each sentence, by successive phrases, shall first come into a kind of knot, and then after a moment of suspended meaning, solve and clear itself," we may represent graphically the double pattern of a prose sentence in this manner:



A represents the sense or meaning pattern; *B* the sound or rhythmic pattern. The poet employs a more complicated sound pattern:



C represents meter. If the poet employs rime, we may add a fourth line. The addition of meter and rime

makes it more difficult for the writer to maintain harmony between sense and sound. Unless the poet is a careful craftsman, he will sacrifice his sentence structure to carry out his rime scheme. Poor sentences are very common in the verse of second-rate poets, and are to be found even in the work of the great. The following lines from one of Wordsworth's sonnets to the River Duddon do not make a model sentence in either prose or verse:

Sole listener, Duddon! to the breeze that played
With thy clear voice, I caught the fitful sound
Wafted o'er sullen moss and craggy mound—
Unfruitful solitudes, that, seemed to upbraid
The sun in heaven!—but now, to form a shade
For Thee, green alders have together wound
Their foliage; ashes flung their arms around;
And birch-trees risen in silver colonnade.

The prose writer keeps his rhythm a little subdued, never permitting it to become regular; but the poet makes his rhythm so regular that we call it metrical or measured. The poet's rhythm is something to be continuously felt. The poet, so to speak, sets his thoughts to a tune. If he employs the iambic rhythm—by far the most common of English meters—he makes what he wishes to say fall into the rhythm of alternately unstressed and stressed syllables (— or *x á*). The tune, if we may call it that, runs *ti-túm, ti-túm, ti-túm*. The prose writer, in speaking of the moonrise, might say, "The moon has come up, and the stars are shining";

but the poet's words must follow a more regular pattern—here the iambic:

The *moón* is *úp*, the *stárs* are *óút*.

The line just quoted from Alfred Noyes is perfectly regular, but the poet's lines are never as regular as this for any great length of time. The monotonous player-piano rhythm does not belong to either good music or good verse. The poet, like the prose writer, varies his rhythm continually, but within narrower limits; he must never get entirely away from the dominant rhythm. Children and adults whose ear is undeveloped like best the mechanically regular rhythm and do not respond readily to poetry or music in which the rhythm is subtly varied from the pattern. Read the two following passages and note the variations in the second. The first is from Kipling's "The Conundrum of the Workshops"; the second is from Masefield's "Sea-fever." The meter is anapestic (— — — or *x x á*).

When the flush of a new-born sun fell first on Eden's green
and gold,
Our father Adam sat under the Tree and scratched with a
stick in the mould;
And the first rude sketch that the world had seen was joy
to his mighty heart,
Till the Devil whispered behind the leaves, "It's pretty, but is it
Art?"

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;

And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's
shaking,

And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.

If you will read Kipling's entire poem, you will find the rhythm growing monotonous because it is not sufficiently varied. Kipling's verse has many merits, but subtlety of rhythm is hardly one of them. Masfield, on the other hand, slows up or quickens his rhythm to harmonize with the changing mood of the poem.

The monotony which comes from too great regularity may be avoided in a number of ways. The poet may leave unstressed or half-stressed a syllable on which we normally expect to find a stress, as in the line,

Among the mountains *by* the winter sea;

or the poet may place a stress of greater or less degree upon a syllable where the stress does not normally fall, as in,

So all *day* long the noise of battle roll'd.

Notice other variations in the passage, which is the beginning of Tennyson's "Morte D'Arthur":

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonesse about their Lord,
King Arthur: then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,

A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Sometimes the poet will substitute a different rhythmic unit (the foot). In iambic verse we often find a trochee (— or *á x*) substituted for an iambus in the first foot of the line, as in

Lay a great water, and the moon was full,
or

And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes.

If you are required to scan poetry, be sure that you do it with your ear and not with your eye. The best way to learn the different rhythms is to read aloud (or, better, have a friend read aloud to you) poems in the various meters until you learn to distinguish *by ear* the iambic, trochaic, dactylic, and anapestic rhythms and acquire some feeling for their appropriateness to different moods and subjects.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE IN VERSE

In reading verse, one should not forget that the words of the poet are, like those of the prose writer, grouped into phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs. In verse, the qualities of clearness, force, ease, and economy are fully as important as in prose. (It is too easy to forget that the poet, like the writer of prose, writes

because he has something to say. Do not let the word music lull your brain into inattentiveness.) In reading poetry, one should perceive not only the regular rhythm but also the prose pattern; that is, the structure of the sentence. The sentence structure and the verse pattern may run parallel or they may run crosswise, like the warp and the woof of a loom. The following line from Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a regular iambic line:

All níght | the dréad- | less án- | gel ún- | pursúed; |

but as we read it, we should note that the line can be read in another way, as if it were prose:

All níght | the dreadless angel | unpursued.

The line divides into three phrases as well as into five iambic feet. The line should be read so as to bring out the meaning but without forgetting the underlying iambic rhythm. The following line from Milton contains three words balanced against one another—a device quite common in prose:

Unrespited, unpitied, unreprieved.

Sometimes one finds two half-lines contrasted with one another, forming an antithesis:

Better *to reign in Hell* than *serve in Heaven*.

Let us note the relation of sentence structure to the line in the following passage from Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*:

Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.

Here the sentence structure and the lines harmonize; the third line is a complete sentence, and the first two lines form the two halves of the first sentence. In these lines there is a pause at the end of each line, so that we feel the line as a unit. Such a line is said to be *end-stopped*. But the poet need not place his pauses at the end of the line; he may place them anywhere; and if he does, he produces an entirely different effect. The effect produced by *run-on* lines, as they are called, is easier to illustrate than to describe. Only the first, third, and last of the following lines from Wordsworth's *The Prelude* have pauses at the end of the line:

So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle: with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far-distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy, not unnoticed while the stars,
Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.

Much of the music of blank verse (iambic pentameter without rime) is due to the continual variation of the pauses; that is, to the changing relation of the structure of the sentence to the line. "True musical delight," said Milton, "consists only in apt numbers, fit

quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse to another, not in the jingling sound of like endings." The following lines from *Paradise Lost* illustrate Milton's practice:

Nor was his name unheard or unadored
In ancient Greece; and in Ausonian land
Men called him Mulciber; and how he fell
From Heaven they fabled, thrown by angry Jove
Sheer o'er the crystal battlements; from morn
To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
A summer's day, and with the setting sun
Dropt from the zenith, like a falling star,
On Lemnos, the Ægean isle.

STYLE IN POETRY

The importance of style in poetry is too often forgotten. Milton varies his style to suit the subject or the mood in which it is treated. He can use the grand style, as in the above lines; but he can describe the approach of evening in lines that are as appropriately subdued as they are beautiful:

Now came still Evening on, and Twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale.
She all night long her amorous descant sung:
Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament
With living sapphires; Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the Moon
Rising in clouded majesty, at length

Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

Milton can rival the Elizabethans, or Keats, or Tennyson in ornate description, as in the following lines from *Comus*, in which Comus describes the lady's song:

Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his [its] hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smiled! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,
Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.
Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now.

And Milton can, as in these lines on the death of Samson, use a style that is utterly simple, bare, restrained but admirably expressive and appropriate:

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,

Dispraise, or blame; nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.

RIME AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Thus far our illustrations have been drawn from blank verse, which of course does not employ rime. Let us see how the addition of rime to the writer's sound pattern affects the other elements. Rime is a special variety of assonance, or vowel repetition, which we noticed in the preceding chapter; but it is used far more systematically. Rimed words are usually emphatic words because, first, they come ordinarily at the end of the line, an emphatic position; and, second, the very fact that a word rimes with another makes it more conspicuous than any other word in the line. Not all poets seem fully aware of the possibilities of rime. We shall draw several illustrations from Alexander Pope, who, if not a great poet, was in his way a consummate craftsman. To the modern reader Pope seems very artificial, but his artificiality makes his verses excellent illustrations of poetic technique. In the following couplet, note that the rime places a strong emphasis, where it belongs, upon the word *man*:

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is Man.

In the first line of the following couplet, note how the rime word is contrasted with another word in the same line and the antithesis heightened by alliteration:

Those rules of old, discovered, not devised,
Are nature still, but nature methodised.

In the six lines printed below, Pope sets off one phrase against another, sometimes in the same line, sometimes in the line following. Note that each line and each couplet are either a complete sentence or a definite structural unit in the sentence.

In poets as true genius is but rare,
True taste as seldom is the critic's share;

Both must alike from Heaven derive their light,
These born to judge as well as those to write.

Let such teach others who themselves excel
And censure freely who have written well.

In the following passage from "An Essay on Criticism" Pope indicates how the poet should make his sound pattern fit the thought and himself illustrates every point he makes:

But most by numbers judge a poet's song,
And smooth or rough, with them, is right or wrong:
In the bright Muse tho' thousand charms conspire,
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire;
Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear,
Not mend their minds; as some to church repair
Not for the doctrine, but the music there.
These equal syllables alone require
Tho' oft the ear the open vowels tire;
While expletives their feeble aid do join,
And ten low words oft creep in one dull line:

While they ring round the same unvaried chimes,
 With sure returns of still expected rhymes;
 Where'er you find "the cooling western breeze,"
 In the next line it "whispers thro' the trees":
 If crystal streams "with pleasing murmurs creep,"
 The reader's threaten'd (not in vain) with "sleep."
 Then, at the last and only couplet, fraught
 With some unmeaning thing they call a thought,
 A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
 That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along. . . .
 True ease in writing comes from Art, not Chance,
 As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance.
 'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence,
 The sound must seem an echo to the sense:
 Soft is the strain when zephyr gently blows,
 And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;
 But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
 The hoarse rough verse should like the torrent roar.
 When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
 The line, too, labours, and the words move slow:
 Not so when swift Camilla scours the plain,
 Flies o'er th' unbending corn, and skims along the main.

Pope's lines are nearly all end-stopped; that is, they have pauses at the end. A poet may, and often does, employ run-on lines, in which the pauses occur somewhere in the middle of the line. In the latter case the rimes are generally less emphasized, and the effect is not monotonous like that of Pope's lines. For a poem of any length this latter method is much the better. There is no finer example in English literature than "My Last Duchess," in which Browning is at his best as a character painter.

MY LAST DUCHESS

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now. Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed: she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir 't was all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name

With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
 In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
 Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
 Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
 —E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
 Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
 As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
 The company below, then. I repeat,
 The Count your master's known munificence
 Is ample warrant that no just pretence
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

STANZAS

A stanza is a group of lines riming in a certain order. The couplet is the briefest possible stanza; the longest, the sonnet, is a complete poem. The stanza is often a single complete sentence; occasionally it is a paragraph. The following stanza from Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes" is printed first as prose and then as verse. Note the sentence structure and then the metrical form, including the rime scheme.

A casement high and triple arch'd there was, all garlanded with carven imag'ries of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass, and diamonded with panes of quaint device, innumerable of stains and splendid dyes, as are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings; and in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries, and twilight saints, and dim emblazonings, a shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings.

A casement high and triple arch'd there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings.

The rime scheme of the Spenserian stanza, which Keats here employs, is quite complex—*a b a b b c b c c*. All conceivable stanzaic forms, however, use two simple types of rime: first, the couplet rime (*a a b b*), in which two lines rime together, and, second, the type in which the lines that rime together are separated by one or more intervening lines. The Spenserian stanza uses both types of rime in a very effective combination.

If you attach little importance to rime, note the different effects derived from varying the order of the rimes (and the lines) in a stanza from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, where the shifting of the lines does not greatly change the sense. The correct version is given last.

Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring, happy bells, across the snow;
Ring out the old, ring in the new;
The year is going, let let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow;
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

The two types of rime are often combined, as in Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper." The change from alternate to couplet rime is most effective in the third stanza, in which the poet's thought shifts, as the rime scheme changes, from the past to the present.

THE SOLITARY REAPER

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands

Of travellers in some shady haunt
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore
Long after it was heard no more.

The skilful poet selects for his poem a stanzaic (or other) form which is fitted to what he wishes to say. In his excellent *Study of Poetry* Professor Bliss Perry suggests briefly the appropriateness of well-known stanza forms for different subjects:

Doubtless there is a certain general fitness, in various stanza forms, for this or that poetic purpose: the stanzas employed by English or Scotch balladry are admittedly excellent for

story-telling; Spenser's favorite stanza is unrivalled for painting dream-pictures and rendering dream-music, but less available for pure narration; Chaucer's seven-line stanza, so delicately balanced upon that fourth, pivotal line, can paint a picture and tell a story too; Byron's *ottava rima* has a devil-may-care jauntiness, borrowed, it is true, from his Italian models, but perfectly fitted to Byron's own mood; the rhymed couplets of Pope sting and glitter like his antitheses, and the couplets of Dryden have their "resonances like a great bronze coin thrown down on marble"; each great artist in English verse, in short, chooses by instinct the general stanza form best suited to his particular purpose, and then moulds its details with whatever cunning he may possess.

Sometimes a poet whose ear, like that of Wordsworth, is not always sure will select the wrong stanza form. This at least seems to me the trouble with his "Reverie of Poor Susan." For this poem Wordsworth selected the galloping anapestic couplet which is effectively used in Byron's "The Destruction of Sennacherib," Browning's "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix," "Joaquin" Miller's "Kit Carson's Ride," and other poems in which a rapid movement is desirable. In Wordsworth's poem the rapid movement seems in the main inappropriate.

THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN

At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years:
Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
In the silence of morning the song of the Bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees
A mounting ascending, a vision of trees;
Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale,
Down which she so often has tripped with her pail;
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade:
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,
And the colors have all passed away from her eyes!

In a poem of considerable length, no matter what form the poet selects, he will vary it to fit the changing content of his poem. Let us note how skilfully Byron varies the *ottava rima* stanza, riming *a b a b a b c c*, in three widely differing selections from *Don Juan*:

If, fallen in evil days on evil tongues,
Milton appealed to the Avenger, Time,
If Time, the Avenger, execrates his wrongs,
And makes the word "Miltonic" mean "*sublime*,"
He deign'd not to belie his soul in songs,
Nor turn his very talent to a crime;
He did not loathe the Sire to laud the Son,
But closed the tyrant-hater he begun.

Think'st thou, could he—the blind Old Man,—arise,
Like Samuel from the grave, to freeze once more
The blood of monarchs with his prophecies,
Or be alive again—again all hoar

With time and trials, and those helpless eyes,
 And heartless daughters—worn—and pale—and poor;
 Would *he* adore a sultan? *he* obey
 The intellectual eunuch Castlereagh? . . .

My days of love are over; me no more
 The charms of maid, wife, and still less of widow,
 Can make a fool of which they made before,—
 In short, I must not lead the life I did do;
 The credulous hope of mutual minds is o'er,
 The copious use of claret is forbid too,
 So for a good old-gentlemanly vice,
 I think I must take up with avarice. . . .

Ave Maria! blessed be the hour!
 The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft
 Have felt that moment in its fullest power
 Sink o'er the earth so beautiful and soft,
 While swung the deep bell in the distant tower,
 Or the faint dying day-hymn stole aloft,
 And not a breath crept through the rosy air,
 And yet the forest leaves seem'd stirr'd with prayer.

Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of prayer!
 Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of love!
 Ave Maria! may our spirits dare
 Look up to thine and to thy Son's above!
 Ave Maria! oh that face so fair!
 Those downcast eyes beneath the Almighty Dove—
 What though 'tis but a pictured image strike,
 That painting is no idol,—'tis too like.

Some kinder casuists are pleased to say,
 In nameless print—that I have no devotion;
 But set those persons down with me to pray,
 And you shall see who has the properest notion

Of getting into heaven the shortest way;

My altars are the mountains and the ocean,
Earth, air, stars,—all that springs from the great Whole,
Who hath produced, and will receive the soul.

Theoretically, the ideal form for a poem would perhaps be an irregular form, like that of the irregular ode, which permits the poet to change his line length, his rime scheme, even his meter, to fit the changing thought of the poem. In actual practice, however, poets usually do their best work in forms that are fixed. One of the greatest poems in the irregular form is Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." The movement of the poem is iambic, but the poet varies his rime scheme and the length of the line to harmonize with the changing thought of the poem. The basis of Wordsworth's meter seems to be the iambic pentameter line; he uses this as a point of departure and as a norm to which he often returns. We quote the fifth section, which contains the leading idea of the poem:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing Boy,
 But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
 He sees it in his joy;
 The Youth, who daily farther from the east
 Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
 And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended;
 At length the Man perceives it die away,
 And fade into the light of common day.

Free verse does not differ greatly from such irregular poems in rime as Wordsworth's ode except that it disregards rime and regularity of meter. On the other hand, free verse is almost impossible to define so as to distinguish it from poetic prose; it is perhaps only prose poetry, or what DeQuincey called "impassioned prose," printed in verse form. Genuine poetry may, however, take the form of free verse. The concluding lines at least of the following poem from Walt Whitman's *Drum-taps* are poetry of a high order.

BIVOUAC ON A MOUNTAINSIDE

I see before me now a traveling army halting,
 Below, a fertile valley spread, with barns and the orchards of
 summer,
 Behind, the terraced sides of a mountain, abrupt, in places
 rising high,
 Broken, with rocks, with clinging cedars, with tall shapes
 dingily seen,
 The numerous camp-fires scatter'd near and far, some away
 up on the mountain,

The shadowy forms of men and horses, looming, large-sized,
flickering,
And over all, the sky—the sky! far, far out of reach, studded,
breaking out, the eternal stars.

Let us compare Whitman's poem with something indisputably great, a passage at the close of the eighth book of the *Iliad* in which Homer describes the Trojan camp. Whitman's poem is probably reminiscent of this very passage, for Whitman knew and loved Homer better than many of his followers seem to have suspected. The translation is by Lang, Leaf, and Myers:

So Hector made harangue, and the Trojans clamoured applause. And they loosed their sweating steeds from the yoke, and tethered them with thongs, each man beside his chariot; and from the city they brought kine and goodly sheep with speed, and provided them with honey-hearted wine and corn from their houses, and gathered much wood withal. And from the plain the winds bare into heaven the sweet savour. But these with high hopes sate them all night along the highways of the battle, and their watchfires burned in multitude. Even as when in heaven the stars about the bright moon shine clear to see, when the air is windless, and all the peaks appear and the tall headlands and glades, and from heaven breaketh open the infinite air, and all stars are seen, and the shepherd's heart is glad; even in like multitude between the ships and the streams of Xanthos appeared the watchfires that the Trojans kindled in front of Ilios. A thousand fires burned in the plain, and by the side of each sate fifty in the gleam of glazing fire. And the horses champed white barley and spelt, and standing by their chariots waited for the throned Dawn.

HOMER IN TRANSLATION

The problem of meter and style is for the translator almost insoluble. What usually happens in the case of Homer is that each translator renders the *Iliad* in the poetic style and metrical form fashionable in his own time. Make a comparison of the Lang, Leaf, and Myers translation with the following versions by well-known poets—I give only the closing lines.

This is Pope's version:

So many flames before proud Ilion blaze,
And lighten glimm'ring Xanthus with their rays;
The long reflections of the distant fires
Gleam on the walls, and tremble on the spires.
A thousand piles the dusky horrors gild,
And shoot a shady lustre o'er the field.
Full fifty guards each flaming pile attend,
Whose umber'd arms by fits thick flashes send;
Loud neigh the coursers o'er their heaps of corn,
And ardent warriors wait the rising morn.

Do you recall Bentley's comment on Pope's translation,
"A very pretty poem, but you must not call it Homer"?
This is Cowper's translation in Miltonic blank verse:

So numerous seem'd those fires, between the stream
Of Xanthus blazing, and the fleet of Greece,
In prospect all of Troy, a thousand fires,
Each watch'd by fifty warriors, seated near;
The steeds beside the chariot stood, their corn
Chewing, and waiting till the golden-throned
Aurora should restore the light of day.

This is Tennyson's version, also in blank verse:

So many a fire between the ships and stream
Of Xanthus blazed before the towers of Troy,
A thousand on the plain; and close by each
Sat fifty in the blaze of burning fire;
And champing golden grain, the horses stood
Hard by their chariots, waiting for the dawn.

Here is Matthew Arnold's version, an attempt to employ the hexameter of the original:

So shone forth, in front of Troy, by the bed of Xanthus,
Between that and the ships, the Trojans' numerous fires.
In the plain there were kindled a thousand fires: by each one
There sat fifty men, in the ruddy light of the fire:
By their chariots stood the steeds, and champed the white
barley
While their masters sat by the fire and waited for morning.

"What could be better than Homer, or worse than almost any translation of him?" remarks George Santayana. Does any one of these versions, including the last, adequately render Homer's style, which Arnold thus characterized: "The translator of Homer should above all be penetrated by a sense of four qualities of his author:—that he is eminently rapid; that he is eminently plain and direct, both in the evolution of his thought and in the expression of it, that is, both in his syntax and in his words; that he is eminently plain and direct in the substance of his thought, that is, in his matter and ideas; and, finally, that he is eminently noble"?

VIII. LITERARY CRITICISM AND ITS CRITICS

Criticism is itself much criticized—which logically establishes its title. No form of mental activity is commoner, and, where the practice of anything is all but universal, protest against it is as idle as apology for it should be superfluous.

W. C. BROWNELL.

In fact, there is no absolute insurance against bad criticism except the intelligence of the reader.

HENRY S. CANBY.

To most persons the phrase *literary criticism* has an unpleasant connotation. It suggests useless fault-finding, something essentially destructive, often malicious. It suggests impractical theorizing; it seems highbrow, academic. These connotations are of course no proper part of the meaning of the word. Criticism means judging, weighing; it involves the finding of merits as well as defects.

From time immemorial, it would seem, certain objections have been raised to both the theory and the practice of criticism; some of them, indeed, have been raised by the critics themselves. I shall notice a few of these objections, for they throw light upon the nature and the limitations of what is a practical art and a type of literature rather than a science.

THE AUTHOR'S OBJECTION

The stoutest objectors to criticism are those who have suffered most—the writers without whose work criticism could not exist. The creative writers have thought of the critic as a parasite. They have accused him of being blind to, or prejudiced against, all that is new in art. In her *Poetry and Criticism*, a living English poet, Edith Sitwell, has compiled an impressive list of false or misleading critical estimates of now famous writers—quite enough to depress the most ardent advocate of literary criticism. The author's attitude toward the contemporary critic is well expressed in a letter of Sidney Lanier:

What possible claim can contemporary criticism set up to respect—that criticism which crucified Jesus Christ, stoned Stephen, hooted Paul for a madman, tried Luther for a criminal, tortured Galileo, bound Columbus in chains, drove Dante into a hell of exile, made Shakspeare write the sonnet, "When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes," gave Milton five pounds for "Paradise Lost," kept Samuel Johnson cooling his heels on Lord Chesterfield's doorstep, reviled Shelley as an unclean dog, killed Keats, cracked jokes on Glück, Schubert, Beethoven, Berlioz, and Wagner, and committed so many other impious follies and stupidities that a thousand letters like this could not suffice even to catalogue them?

Historically, the author's objection has much validity. Too often the critic, whose taste has been formed upon older models, like Pope in one age or Tennyson in an-

other, fails to perceive the merit of the new in Wordsworth, or Sandburg, and condemns it merely because it is different from what he has learned to appreciate. Practically all authors—including those now living—have suffered from this unintelligent kind of criticism. Among nineteenth century writers, Ibsen, Melville, and Whitman are conspicuous examples. "The characters of prophet and critic," remarked Hazlitt, "are not always united."

A large part of the author's objection to criticism, however, is due to the fact that what the author generally wants is not criticism but indiscriminate praise. The author would reserve criticism for creative writers alone. Said Pope:

Let such teach others who themselves excel,
And censure freely who have written well.

But when the creative writer turns critic, he is often the greatest of all sinners. Witness the numerous reviews which contemporary poets write of the works of their friends. The creative writer is as likely to indulge his prejudices as the critic. Here is an example from *The Notebooks* of Samuel Butler:

Talking it over, we agreed that Blake was no good because he learnt Italian at 60 in order to study Dante, and we knew Dante was no good because he was so fond of Virgil, and Virgil was no good because Tennyson ran him, and as for Tennyson—well, Tennyson goes without saying.

And yet one must admit that a large percentage of the great critics have themselves been creative writers. Conspicuous examples are Coleridge, Arnold, Poe, and Lowell. "Without the critical faculty," said Oscar Wilde, "there is no artistic creation at all, worthy of the name."

The author regards the critic as a would-be great writer who, having failed in creative writing, turns to criticizing the books of those who can write. "Those who have failed as writers turn reviewers," said Landor; and Dryden wrote:

They who write ill and they who ne'er durst write
Turn critics out of mere revenge and spite.

There is an element of truth in the author's contention, but it does not follow that Hazlitt, Carlyle, and Sainte-Beuve, who were not great poets, were incapable of writing just and illuminating criticism of Shakespeare and Homer. "You *may* abuse a tragedy, though you cannot write one," said Samuel Johnson. "You may scold a carpenter who has made you a bad table, though you cannot make a table. It is not your trade to make tables." "That," remarks P. P. Howe of Johnson's dictum, "is the critic's Declaration of Rights." "But the artists," continues Howe, "are not the best critics. There comes a point in the career of the creative artist when he can read with patience no books but his own."

The author looks upon the critic as the farmer looks

upon the middleman who buys his cotton, corn, or tobacco and sells it at a profit which the producer thinks should come to himself. The critic, however, is no parasite. "Fortunately, for criticism," says Spingarn, "it does not live by the grace of poets to whom it can be of small service at its best, but by the grace of others who have neither the poet's genius nor the critic's insight." Such authors as Henry James and Edwin Arlington Robinson mean little to the average reader until some critic has interpreted the significance of their work. Often the author does not himself know his best work and cannot explain its significance in terms which the average reader can grasp. What the critic can do is explained by H. L. Mencken in a definition of "catalytic" criticism:

A catalyzer, in chemistry, is a substance that helps two other substances to react. For example, consider the case of ordinary cane sugar and water. Dissolve the sugar in the water and nothing happens. But add a few drops of acid and the sugar changes into glucose and fructose. Meanwhile, the acid itself is absolutely unchanged. All it does is to stir up the reaction between the water and the sugar. The process is called catalysis. The acid is a catalyzer.

Well, this is almost exactly the function of a genuine critic of the arts. It is his business to provoke the reaction between the work of art and the spectator. The spectator, untutored, stands unmoved; he sees the work of art, but it fails to make any intelligible impression on him; if he were spontaneously sensitive to it, there would be no need for criticism. But now comes the critic with his catalysis. He makes the work of art live for the spectator; he makes the spectator live for the work of art.

Out of the process come understanding, appreciation, intelligent enjoyment—and that is precisely what the artist tried to produce.

Most of the remaining objections to criticism resemble objections to the study of philosophy, theology, and esthetics, and they are to be met in the same manner as William James met the objections to philosophy in his spirited essay, "Philosophy and its Critics." These objections come, in the main, from persons who, disgusted with bad examples of criticism, have arrived at the premature conclusion that all criticism is, if not actually misleading, worthless when applied to a particular book. As a matter of fact, the more bad specimens of the critical art one finds, the greater the reason for a systematic study of an art so poorly, and so universally, practiced.

IS CRITICISM A SCIENCE?

One common objection to criticism may be stated as follows: Literary criticism is not a science; it is dogmatic; it judges by rules derived from obsolete models, personal prejudice, or theories of doubtful validity. Unlike the sciences, continues the indictment, criticism has made no real advance and it yields no practical results; there is nothing of permanent value in its findings. As evidence of the truth of these objections, the objectors point to the manner in which critics disagree, not merely about living authors, but about authors who

have been dead for centuries. If critics cannot agree as to the merits of Homer or Euripides, what help can they possibly give us in dealing with the work of recent authors, who interest us more than the dead? This sounds like a very formidable indictment, and there is so much truth in it that Anatole France and others have thought it substantially true.

As a matter of fact, criticism is not a science and has rarely regarded itself as such. Yet it has continually improved its practice by borrowing the methods and the discoveries of science. Taine and Brunetière, who tried to give criticism something of the validity of science, failed in their aim, but they did arrive at certain results which have a permanent value.

Much of the field formerly claimed by philosophy has been taken over by one or another of the advancing sciences. Much the same thing may be said of literary criticism. Closely allied to criticism, but no longer strictly a part of it, are philology, the study of texts, sources, influences, parallels, and backgrounds of various kinds. These methods of study, employed in all research in literary history, are still closely related to criticism—though not a part of it—and they often help the critic to reach more accurate results. These methods of research have materially aided the critic by giving him better texts to criticize and by giving him more, and more accurate, information about the life and works of an author and about the social, economic,

and literary influences which affected his work. The critic of Shakespeare today has available an enormous fund of information about the dramatist's work that Coleridge and Hazlitt never suspected. No longer need the critic guess as to the nature of Shakespeare's theater, actors, and audience, his reputation, or the approximate dates of his plays. But for the invaluable findings of the textual critics of Shakespeare, the esthetic critic would not know definitely which of the plays were written wholly by Shakespeare and which contain the work of other hands. Writing in 1817, Hazlitt in his ignorance praised as characteristically Shakespearean the parts of *Henry VIII* which are now thought to be the work of John Fletcher:

The character of Wolsey, the description of his pride and of his fall, are inimitable, and have, besides their gorgeousness of effect, a pathos which only the genius of Shakespear could lend to the distresses of a proud, bad man, like Wolsey. . . . Nor is the account which Griffith gives of Wolsey's death less Shakespearian.

CRITICISM DEALS IN ABSTRACTIONS AND UNREALITIES

Another objection, closely related to the last, is that criticism is not in touch with real life; that it deals with intellectual abstractions, substituting reason—or something worse—for experience; that it simplifies too much since life is complex and every work of art is *sui generis*; and that criticism substitutes

something else for the work of art under discussion.

The history of criticism shows clearly that critics have frequently laid themselves open to this charge. The long tyranny of the three dramatic "unities" in France, for example, was the work of critics who did not know the work of Aristotle, in whose name they established and defended these supposedly fixed principles. And yet there is no inherent reason why criticism should be abstract, or divorced from life, or should substitute something else for the work of art under discussion. The criticism written by Lamb, Hazlitt, and Sainte-Beuve is in touch with life and is full of the appeal to experience.

RATIONALIZING

A formidable objection to criticism which is not new although we know it by a new name—*rationalizing*—is often raised nowadays. The term seems to owe its wide currency to James Harvey Robinson's *The Mind in the Making*, from which by way of definition I quote the following sentences:

A third kind of thinking is stimulated when anyone questions our belief and opinions. . . . We like to continue to believe what we have been accustomed to accept as true, and the resentment aroused when doubt is cast upon any of our assumptions leads us to seek every manner of excuse for clinging to them. *The result is that most of our so-called reasoning consists in finding arguments for going on believing as we already do.* . . . We can readily give what seem to us "good"

reasons for being a Catholic or a Mason, a Republican or a Democrat, an adherent or opponent of the League of Nations. But the "real" reasons are usually on quite a different plane. . . . This spontaneous and loyal support of our preconceptions—this process of finding "good" reasons to justify our routine beliefs—is known to modern psychologists as "rationalizing"—clearly only a new name for a very ancient thing. . . . *Rationalizing is the self-exculpation which occurs when we feel ourselves, or our group, accused of misapprehension or error.* . . . A history of philosophy and theology could be written in terms of grouches, wounded pride, and aversions, and it would be far more instructive than the usual treatments of these themes. . . . And now the astonishing and perturbing suspicion emerges that perhaps almost all that had passed for social science, political economy, politics, and ethics in the past may be brushed aside by future generations as mainly rationalizing. . . . This conclusion may be ranked by students of a hundred years hence as one of the several great discoveries of our age.

The Robinsonian objection is really only another form of the old objection that criticism is not a science. Philosophers like William James and George Santayana were aware of the danger years ago, and Arnold and Huxley complained that men use their reason not to find out the truth but to defend themselves for doing or thinking what they had already decided upon.

But the danger of rationalizing is a very real one. We are like the Puritans in Butler's *Hudibras*, who

Compound for sins they are inclined to
By damning those they have no mind to.

Examples of rationalizing abound in the history of criticism. Hazlitt, usually a sound critic, in reviewing Coleridge's poems, allowed his dislike of the man to bias his estimate of the poems. A reviewer of Keats's *Endymion*, while admitting some "gleams of genius," yet systematically condemned the whole poem because he disliked the political opinions of Keats's friend and mentor, Leigh Hunt. Many critics have been unable to see the merit of Poe's work because of what they knew, or thought they knew, of Poe's character. One suspects Matthew Arnold and Stuart P. Sherman of rationalizing when they practically limit their discussion of poetry to ideas and say little or nothing of the beauty of form. When Emerson tells us that "it is not metres, but a metre-making argument, that makes a poem," we cannot but remember his bad rimes and his defective sense of poetic form. Conrad Aiken accused Amy Lowell of arranging the poets in her *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* in ascending order with her group, the Imagists, at the end in order to make it appear that this group represents the climax of the contemporary poetic movement.

Robinson's chief contribution is to call our attention to the enormous extent of rationalizing in our thinking. When a reader first meets with this objection, he finds it very disconcerting; he at once suspects all logical processes of thought. He feels like retorting that Robinson is himself rationalizing; that he has perhaps a

temperamental dislike of art, literature, and philosophy. Rationalizing is a subtle danger; it resembles the by-path leading to hell which Christian found at the very gate of Heaven. But here again, criticism is learning something from science. The knowledge of the danger should warn us against it.

SCHOLARSHIP AND LITERARY CRITICISM

The most deplorable aspect of contemporary criticism is its practical divorce from scholarship. Except in the technical journals and such intellectual periodicals as *The Yale Review* and *The Saturday Review of Literature*, the vast majority of critical articles and reviews today are written by men and women who lack thorough scholarly training and do not know the results of scholarly research. The average reviewer—who is a critic of a sort—frequently displays an appalling ignorance of what every intelligent graduate student knows as a matter of course. It is ignorance and a consequent lack of a sense of proportion which lead reviewers to over-praise contemporary writers or wholly to misunderstand them. “In the course of a single week recently,” says William McFee, “I learned from reviews that John Galsworthy is the worst short-story writer who ever lived; that most of Conrad, Stevenson, and Walter Pater is sheer bad writing; that Jack London has come back from Hell and has written a novel under another man’s name; that Molière is an over-

rated bore, and Congreve so insignificant that a single story by Ring Lardner overwhelms all he ever wrote."

Scholars are, on the other hand, too often indifferent to criticism. The investigator, working in the spirit of the scientist, takes the position that criticism is not his business. His task, as he sees it, is to add to the sum total of human knowledge. The articles in our scholarly journals are concerned with philology, chronology, dates of authorship and publication, problems of authenticity, sources, influences, and the like. This information is often extremely valuable; the critic should know it. But the critic does not know the results of the scholar's research, and the scholar shirks the rôle of the critic; he will not write for the newspapers and popular magazines. The result is that contemporary criticism is not nearly so sound as it should be and that present-day scholarship tends to be dry, academic, unproductive.

The situation as I have described it belongs rather to ten years ago than today, but the effects of the divorce between scholarship and criticism are still visible on all sides. More than ever today, scholarship should be the basis of criticism. As Professor Albert Feuillerat pointed out in an able article on "Scholarship and Literary Criticism," in *The Yale Review* for January, 1925, "Erudition should naturally be the foundation of all its [criticism's] constructions, erudition leaning on the one hand on history, on philology on the other. And from this as a spring board it will be able boldly to rise to

that intimate apprehension of the inner meaning of literary works in all their aspects, historical, psychological, philosophical, and æsthetic, which, as we have seen, is the goal of all criticism." If this seems difficult, he says, "we must take criticism for what it is, for the hardest and most complicated of intellectual occupations."

CRITICISM IS OMNIPRESENT AND INESCAPABLE

In a sense all objections to the practice of literary criticism are beside the point, for criticism is inevitable so long as there are books to read and people to talk or write about them. We may apply to criticism a remark that Santayana made of art in general: "That art is *prima facie* and in itself a good cannot be doubted. It is a spontaneous activity, and that settles the question." In one way or another every reader performs the function of a critic. A friend asks you to recommend "an interesting book," or you ask him what he thinks of a recent novel; your answers are literary criticism—no matter if they are as simple as, "You would like *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*," or, "Sinclair Lewis's new novel is dull." For you have made distinctions among books; you have passed judgment upon them. We are all critics because we cannot help forming and communicating estimates of what we read. Our standards may be simple or complex, conscious or unconscious, good or bad; but we all have something that passes for

standards. Usually our reactions to books are haphazard, and they are often prejudiced. As intelligent men and women, we ought to be able to form and defend standards that are reasonable and sound; and if our standards prove defective, we ought of course to revise them. If there is, as John Erskine has suggested, "a moral obligation to be intelligent," a large part of that obligation rests upon the readers of books. We do not wish to resemble the wealthy art patron who remarked to a distinguished painter, "I don't know anything about art, but I know what I like." The artist's reply was, "So do the beasts of the field."

We too often think of criticism as something written. As a matter of fact, most criticism is not written; it is talk about books—in the home, in the class-room, at clubs, wherever people discuss books. Every student of literature is necessarily something of a critic even though he may never write a line for publication. Great, then, is the need for study of an art so universally practiced. There is a wide difference between such criticism as most of us practice and a critical essay by Arnold or Hazlitt. We turn to the great critics because they, being better trained and more highly gifted, see more in books than we see. The critics are often wrong—some of them many times,—but, like the government weather prophets, they are right much oftener than the rest of us. And, after all, the differences of opinion among the great critics as to masterpieces are

comparatively unimportant. As Arnold Bennett has said, "The one reassuring aspect of the literary affair is that the passionate few are passionate about the same things."

Although there is, in the scientific sense, probably no such thing as the evolution of literature or of criticism, there has been a real advance, I believe, in certain respects. For one thing, we do not now condemn the work of a poet because we object to his politics, as was commonly done only a century ago. Criticism has become somewhat less dogmatic; it is more tolerant of departures from the beaten path. Nowadays no one critical theory dominates the field, as was true in the first half of the eighteenth century. Now we have Van Wyck Brooks to balance Norman Foerster and Irving Babbitt to offset H. L. Mencken. If the advance in knowledge has left many things in doubt, in criticism there is hope, as in science, that the future will throw new light upon them. Criticism, like philosophy, religion, and esthetics, must concern itself with materials which have not yet been conquered by science and perhaps never will wholly be. And yet we may hope that science will some day throw light upon some of the doubtful matters which concern us so deeply as living and thinking men and women.

We shall probably never be able to prove scientifically that matter exists or that man is immortal, but most of us will nevertheless continue to hold passionate convic-

tions in spite of those who deny our right to believe what we cannot prove. In our efforts to co-ordinate our thinking—to arrive at a working philosophy of life or of art—we necessarily form opinions in regard to these things. We generalize upon the basis of fragmentary observation and uncertain hypotheses because we feel that, although we can never give a final answer to the problems of philosophy, religion, or esthetics, certain hypotheses have at least a greater practical value than others.

IX. THE FUNCTIONS OF LITERATURE AND CRITICISM

In every age impression (or enjoyment) and dogmatism (or judgment) have grappled with one another. They are the two sexes of criticism.

J. E. SPINGARN.

One should indeed not forget that in the house of art there are many mansions.

IRVING BABBITT.

In this chapter I shall examine, somewhat more systematically, certain important views of literature briefly suggested in the first chapter. I shall also notice certain views of the function of criticism. The two cannot well be separated, for one's conception of the function of criticism is very largely dependent upon one's conception of the nature and aims of literature.

CRITICISM IS A TYPE OF LITERATURE

The functions of criticism and of literature seemed to Matthew Arnold much the same. In his essay on Wordsworth he said: "It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life—to the question:

How to live." He praised Sophocles because he "saw life steadily and saw it whole," and he said that the business of the critic is "to see the object as in itself it really is."

In an interesting essay on "The Critical Game," John Macy maintains that criticism is merely a form of literature and is to be justified on exactly the same grounds. "The function of criticism at the present time, and at all times," he says, "is the function of all literature: to be wise, witty, eloquent, instructive, humorous, original, graceful, beautiful, provocative, irritating, persuasive. That is, it must possess some of the many merits that can be found in any type of literature; it must in some way be good writing." To this, I think, every one would agree; but very many would not agree with the opinion expressed in Macy's next sentence: "There is no other sound principle to be discovered in the treatises on the art of criticism or in fine examples of the art."

ESTHETIC CRITICISM

The first duty of a critic is, as Carlyle said in his essay on Goethe, to find out "what the poet's aim really and truly was, how the task he had to do stood before his eye, and how far, with such materials as were afforded him, he has fulfilled it." Some modern critics go farther than this and maintain that this is all the critic should do. "Criticism," says Arthur Symons, "is a valuation of forces, and it is indifferent to their direction."

"To create a work of art," says J. E. Spingarn, "is the goal of every artist; and all questions resolve themselves into this: Has he or has he not created a work of art?" "A critic, if he is really to merit the name," says Guy de Maupassant, "should be only an analyst, without bias, without preferences, without passions; and, like a critic of pictures, should consider only the artistic value of the object of art submitted to him." De Maupassant's ideas are explained in the preface of his novel, *Pierre et Jean*, from which the following passage is taken:

In brief, the public is composed of numerous groups who cry to us [who write]:

"Console me."

"Amuse me."

"Make me sad."

"Make me sympathetic."

"Make me dream."

"Make me laugh."

"Make me shudder."

"Make me weep."

"Make me think."

Some rare spirits alone request of the artist:

"Make me something beautiful, in the form which suits you best, according to your temperament."

The artist tries, succeeds or fails.

The critic ought to judge the result only according to the nature of the effort; and he has no right to preoccupy himself with tendencies.

This has been said a thousand times already. It will always be necessary to repeat it. . . .

These different theories of art must be admitted with equal interest, and the works which they produce must be judged solely from the point of view of their artistic merit, with the acceptance *a priori* of the general ideas which gave them birth.

De Maupassant's attitude is only a modification of the author's objection to all criticism, apropos of which Norman Foerster remarks:

While artists are prone to resent the questioning of their intentions, presupposing that these intentions are admirable and that only their success in carrying them out is open to debate, they rarely hesitate to question the intentions of other artists.

Much criticism of a writer's subject matter is of course irrelevant. And yet as H. L. Mencken wisely comments, "Beauty as we know it in this world is by no means the apparition *in vacuo* that Mr. Spingarn seems to see. It has its social, its political, even its moral implications." And Irving Babbitt, a critic of a very different school from Mencken, observes: "It is not enough, as Mr. Spingarn would have us believe, that the critic should ask what the creator aimed to do and whether he has fulfilled his aim; he must also ask whether the aim is intrinsically worth while. He must, in other words, rate creation with reference to some standard set both above his own temperament and that of the creator." Let us turn to some of the rival conceptions of literature; we shall return to the function of criticism later.

LITERATURE SHOULD PICTURE LIFE AS IT IS

"The air of reality," said Henry James, ". . . seems to me to be the supreme virtue of a novel." Another novelist, William Dean Howells, went still further when he referred to "the foolish old superstition that literature and art are anything but the expression of life, and are to be judged by any other test than that of their fidelity to it." The ideal of the realist is finely expressed in the preface to Thackeray's *Pendennis*—I wish I could quote the whole of it:

If this kind of composition, of which the two years' product is now laid before the public, fail in art, as it constantly does and must, it at least has the advantage of a certain truth and honesty, which a work more elaborate might lose. In his constant communication with the reader, the writer is forced into frankness of expression, and to speak out his own mind and feelings as they urge him. . . . In the course of his volubility, the perpetual speaker must of necessity lay bare his own weaknesses, vanities, peculiarities. And as we judge of a man's character, after long frequenting his society, not by one speech, or by one mood or opinion, or by one day's talk, but by the tenor of his general bearing and conversation; so of a writer, who delivers himself up to you perforce unreservedly, you say—Is he honest? Does he tell the truth in the main? Does he seem actuated by a desire to find out and speak it? Is he a quack, who shams sentiment, or mouths 'for effect? Does he seek popularity by claptraps or other arts? I can no more ignore good fortune than any other chance which has befallen me. I have found many thousand more readers than I ever looked for. I have no right to say to these, You shall not find fault with my art, or fall asleep over my pages; but I ask you to

believe that this person writing strives to tell the truth. If there is not that, there is nothing.

“My strongest effort,” said George Eliot, “is . . . to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind.” She states her artistic creed in the seventeenth chapter of *Adam Bede*. To the imaginary romantic reader who says to her, “Do improve the facts a little,” she replies:

But, my good friend, what will you do then with your fellow-parishioner who opposes your husband in the vestry?—with your newly appointed vicar, whose style of preaching you find painfully below that of his regretted predecessor?—with the honest servant who worries your soul with her one failing?—with your neighbour, Mrs. Green, who was really kind to you in your last illness, but has said several ill-natured things about you since your convalescence?—nay, with your excellent husband himself, who has other irritating habits besides that of not wiping his shoes? These fellow-mortals, every one, must be accepted as they are: you can neither straighten their noses, nor brighten their wit, nor rectify their dispositions; and it is these people—amongst whom your life is passed—that it is needful you should tolerate, pity, and love: it is these more or less ugly, stupid, inconsistent people, whose movements of goodness you should be able to admire—for whom you should cherish all possible hopes, all possible patience. And I would not, even if I had the choice, be the clever novelist who could create a world so much better than this, in which we get up in the morning to do our daily work, that you would be likely to turn a harder, colder eye on the dusty streets and the common green fields—on the real breathing men and women, who can be chilled by your indifference or injured by your prejudice; who can be cheered and helped onward by

your fellow-feeling, your forbearance, your outspoken, brave justice. . . .

. . . do not impose on us any æsthetic rules which shall banish from the region of Art those old women scraping carrots with their work-worn hands, those heavy clowns taking holiday in a dingy pot-house, those rounded backs and stupid, weather-beaten faces that have bent over the spade and done the rough work of the world—those homes with their tin pans, their brown pitchers, their rough curs, and their clusters of onions. In this world there are so many of these common coarse people, who have no picturesque sentimental wretchedness! It is so needful we should remember their existence, else we may happen to leave them quite out of our religion and philosophy, and frame lofty theories which only fit a world of extremes. Therefore let Art always remind us of them; therefore let us always have men ready to give the loving pains of a life to the faithful representing of commonplace things—men who see beauty in these commonplace things, and delight in showing how kindly the light of heaven falls on them.

The romancers of course take issue with the realists. “No art,” says Stevenson, “. . . can successfully ‘compete with life’”; and again, “The life of man is not the subject of novels, but the inexhaustible magazine from which subjects are to be selected; the name of these is legion; and with each new subject . . . the true artist will vary his method and change the point of attack.” Of the abuses of realism, Clayton Hamilton says in *A Manual of the Art of Fiction*:

The realist . . . in his careful imitation of actual life, may grow near-sighted and come to value facts for their own sake, forgetting that his primary purpose in setting them forth should

be to lead us to understand the truths which underlie them. More and more, as the realist advances in technic and gains in ability to represent the actual, he is tempted to make photographs of life instead of pictures. A picture differs from a photograph mainly in its artistic repression of the insignificant; it exhibits life more truly because it focusses attention on essentials. But any novel that dwells sedulously upon non-essentials and exalts the insignificant obscures the truth. This is the fallacy of the photographic method; and from this fallacy arise the tedious minuteness of George Eliot in her more pedestrian moments, the interminable tea-cups of Anthony Trollope, and the mire of the imitators of Zola. Realism latterly, especially in France, has shown a tendency to degenerate into so-called "naturalism," a method of art which casts the unnatural emphasis of photographic reproduction upon phases of actual life which are base in themselves and insignificant of the eternal instinct which leads men more naturally to look upward at the stars than downward at the mud. The "naturalistic" writers are deceived in thinking that they represent life as it really is. If their thesis were true, the human race would have dwindled to extinction long ago. Surely a photograph of a slattern in the gutter is no more natural than a picture of Rosalind in the Forest of Arden; and no accuracy of imitated actuality can make it more significant of truth.

ROMANCE

The abuses of romance should be obvious from what has been said about realism, but the romantic method may tell us the essential truth also. To Kipling the essence of life is romance. In his striking poem, "To the True Romance," he says:

Since spoken word Man's Spirit stirred
Beyond his belly-need,

What is is Thine of fair design
In Thought and Craft and Deed.
Each stroke aright of toil and fight,
That was and that shall be,
And hope too high wherefore we die,
Has birth and worth in Thee. . . .

As Thou didst teach all lovers speech
And Life all mystery,
So shalt Thou rule by every school
Till life and longing die,
Who wast or yet the Lights were set,
A whisper in the Void,
Who shalt be sung through planets young
When this is clean destroyed.

An admirable definition of romance is found in the preface to Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*:

When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a [realistic] Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former—while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart—has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. If he think fit, also, he may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights, and deepen and enrich the shadows, of the picture. He will be wise, no doubt, to make a very moderate use of the privileges here stated, and especially to

mingle the Marvellous rather as a slight, delicate and evanescent flavour, than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the public. He can hardly be said, however, to commit a literary crime, even if he disregard this caution.

The greatest novels and plays make use of both the realistic and the romantic methods. There are many realistic touches in Scott's novels and, as Stevenson points out, there are romantic passages in Thackeray: "If Rawdon Crawley's blow were not delivered, *Vanity Fair* would cease to be a work of art. . . . The end of *Esmond* is a yet wider excursion from the author's customary fields; the scene at Castlewood is pure Dumas; the great and wily English borrower has here borrowed from the great, unblushing French thief; as usual, he has borrowed admirably well, and the breaking of the sword rounds off the best of all his books with a manly, martial note." The following paragraph from *The House of the Seven Gables* gives us a realistic side of Hawthorne:

Our miserable old Hepzibah! It is a heavy annoyance to a writer, who endeavours to represent nature, its various attitudes and circumstances, in a reasonably correct outline and true colouring, that so much of the mean and ludicrous should be hopelessly mixed up with the purest pathos which life anywhere supplies to him. What tragic dignity, for example, can be wrought into a scene like this! How can we elevate our history of retribution for the sin of long ago, when, as one of our most prominent figures, we are compelled to introduce—not a young and lovely woman, nor even the stately remains of beauty, storm-shattered by affliction—but a gaunt, sallow, rusty-

jointed maiden, in a long-waisted silk gown, and with the strange horror of a turban on her head! Her visage is not even ugly. It is redeemed from insignificance only by the contraction of her eyebrows into a near-sighted scowl. And finally, her great life-trial seems to be that, after sixty years of idleness, she finds it convenient to earn comfortable bread by setting up a shop in a small way. Nevertheless, if we look through all the heroic fortunes of mankind, we shall find this same entanglement of something mean and trivial with whatever is noblest in joy or sorrow. Life is made up of marble and mud. And without all the deeper trust in a comprehensive sympathy above us, we might hence be led to suspect the insult of a sneer, as well as an immitigable frown, on the iron countenance of fate. What is called poetic insight is the gift of discerning, in this sphere of strangely-mingled elements, the beauty and the majesty which are compelled to assume a garb so sordid.

BEAUTY

"Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem," said Edgar Allan Poe; and again, "I would define, in brief, the Poetry of words as *The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty*." Poe believed with Emerson—although they attached different meanings to the word—that "Beauty is its own excuse for being." Poe's creed was almost that which has come to be identified with the phrase, "Art for art's sake." "The simple fact is," he said, ". . . that under the sun there neither exists nor *can* exist any work more thoroughly dignified, more supremely noble than this very poem, this poem *per se*, this poem which is a poem and nothing more, this poem written solely for the poem's sake."

Among English poets, John Keats is closer in his ideals to Poe than any other major poet. "I have not the slightest feeling of humility," he wrote in one of his letters, "towards . . . anything in existence,—but the eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of great Men." And again: "I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections, and the truth of Imagination. What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth—whether it existed before or not,—for I have the same idea of all our passions as of Love: they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty. . . . The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream,—he awoke and found it truth." These passages give us a better background than we usually have for understanding the famous conclusion of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn".

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
 With forest branches and the trodden weed;
 Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
 As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
 When old age shall this generation waste,
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
 "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

With this passage in mind, W. C. Brownell remarks of the function of criticism: "The end of our effort is a true estimate of the data encountered in the search

for that beauty which from Plato to Keats has been virtually identified with truth, and the highest service of criticism is to secure that the true and the beautiful, and not the ugly and the false, may in wider and wider circles of appreciation be esteemed to be the good."

We may all agree with Poe that, "An immortal instinct deep within the spirit of man is thus plainly a sense of the beautiful"; but when we come to define beauty, we are as far apart as ever. Poe and Keats would perhaps agree with Emerson when he says, "The world is not painted, or adorned, but is from the beginning beautiful; and God has not made some beautiful things, but Beauty is the creator of the universe"; but what would they say of this: "Beauty is the mark God sets upon virtue," or "The presence of a higher, namely, of the spiritual element, is essential to its perfection"? "You may talk lightly about truth, insight, knowledge, wisdom, humour, and beauty," says Arnold Bennett. "But these comfortable words do not really carry you very far, for each of them has to be defined, especially the first and last. It is all very well for Keats in his airy manner to assert that beauty is truth, truth beauty, and that that is all he knows or needs to know. I, for one, need to know a lot more. And I never shall know. Nobody, not even Hazlitt nor Sainte-Beuve, has ever finally explained why he thought a book beautiful."

LITERATURE IS RELIGIOUS

Some critics, like Poe, would divorce literature from morality; and others, like Croce and Spingarn, would have us disregard moral and social values in our judgment of a work of art; but there are notable critics for whom literature has profound social and religious implications. "Viewed, to-day, from a point of view sufficiently overarching," said Walt Whitman, "the problem of humanity all over the civilized world is social and religious, and is to be finally met and treated by literature." "Genius is religious," said Emerson.

A similar view was expressed by the great Russian novelist, Leo Tolstoy, in *What Is Art?* "In order correctly to define art," said he, "it is necessary, first of all, to cease to consider it as a means to pleasure, and to consider it as one of the conditions of human life. Viewing it in this way, we cannot fail to observe that art is one of the means of intercourse between man and man." "Art is a human activity, consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings, and also experience them."

"The estimation of the value of art," continues Tolstoy, ". . . depends on men's perception of the meaning of life; depends on what they consider to be the good and the evil of life. And what is good and what

is evil are defined by what are termed religions." "In every age, and in every human society, there exists a religious sense, common to that whole society, of what is good and what is bad, and it is this religious conception that decides the value of the feelings transmitted by art." Tolstoy would, I think, accept Carlyle's definition of religion: "By religion I do not mean here the church-creed which he professes, the articles of faith which he will sign and, in words or otherwise, assert; not this wholly, in many cases not this at all. . . . But the thing a man does practically believe . . . the thing a man does practically lay to heart, and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this mysterious universe, and his duty and destiny there, that is in all cases the primary thing for him, and creatively determines all the rest. That is his *religion*." Tolstoy illustrates by referring to the great traditions, the Hebrew and the Greek:

If the religion places the meaning of life in worshipping one God and fulfilling what is regarded as His will, as was the case among the Jews, then the feelings flowing from love to that God, and to His law, successfully transmitted through the art of poetry by the prophets, by the psalms, or by the epic of the book of Genesis, are good, high art. All opposing that, as for instance the transmission of feelings of devotion to strange gods, or of feelings incompatible with the law of God, would be considered bad art. Or if, as was the case among the Greeks, the religion places the meaning of life in earthly happiness, in beauty and in strength, then art successfully transmitting the joy and energy of life would be considered good art, but art

which transmitted feelings of effeminacy or despondency would be bad art."

A very similar position is taken by Stuart P. Sherman in "The Point of View in American Criticism":

The great civilizations of the world hitherto have been integrated in their religion. By religion I mean that which, in the depths of his heart, a man really believes desirable and praiseworthy. . . . The leading Athenians, in their best period, reached such an agreement; and that is why, whether you meditate on their art, their poetry, or their philosophy, whether you gaze at the frieze of the Parthenon, or read a drama of Sophocles, or the prayer of Socrates, you feel yourself in the presence of one and the same formative spirit—one superb stream of energy, superbly controlled by a religious belief that moral and physical symmetry are the most desirable and praiseworthy things in the outer and the inner man.

To Tolstoy, as to Sherman, most modern literature seemed without any guiding religious conception to give it meaning. Irving Babbitt holds the same position:

Any one who looked up to the standards established by the two great traditions, the classical and the Christian, tended to acquire in some measure the supreme Christian virtue, humility, and the supreme classical virtue, decorum, or, if one prefers, a sense of proportion. To repudiate the traditional Christian and classical checks and at the same time fail to work out some new and more vital control upon impulse and temperament is to be guilty of high treason to civilization.

Tolstoy's theory is better than his application of it would suggest. He selects as examples of great "reli-

gious" and "universal" art (I give only the books written in English): Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *The Chimes*; George Eliot's *Adam Bede*; and Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Without condemning any book that Tolstoy has chosen, we may well ask where are *The Canterbury Tales*, *King Lear*, *Paradise Lost*, *Tom Jones*, and *Henry Esmond*, and, in American literature, *Leaves of Grass*, *Moby Dick*, *The Scarlet Letter*, and Emerson's *Essays*?

LITERATURE IS A CRITICISM OF LIFE

To Matthew Arnold, whom some regard as the greatest of English critics, literature had social and religious implications. "The true end of all art, he held," says Stuart P. Sherman, "and of poetry especially, is, like that of religion, to strengthen and uphold the heart with high inspirations and consolations." In "The Study of Poetry" Arnold wrote: "The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. . . . More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry." So far Arnold's prediction has not been realized.

Arnold's ideal for civilization is summed up in the

word *culture*. What, then, is culture? It is "a study of perfection." Culture includes "the scientific passion, the sheer desire to see things as they are," but it includes much more. Perfection, at which culture aims, "is a harmonious expansion of *all* the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature, and is not consistent with the over-development of any one power at the expense of the rest. Here culture goes beyond religion, as religion is generally conceived by us." Culture "consists in becoming something rather than in having something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances."

The function of criticism, as Arnold sees it, is a lofty one, and it is to be applied to every aspect of life and art. Its object is "to keep man from a self-satisfaction which is retarding and vulgarising, to lead him towards perfection, by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself, and the absolute beauty and fitness of things." "It obeys an instinct prompting it to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind; and to value knowledge and thought as they approach this best, without the intrusion of any other considerations whatever." "Its business is . . . simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas." "It is the business of the critical power . . . to see the object as in itself

it really is." The last sentence shows the influence of modern science.

The chief objections raised to Arnold's view of literature are that it stresses the beauty of form too little and moral values too much. "There is a vast deal in life and letters both which is not immoral, but simply a-moral," says Stevenson; "which either does not regard the human will at all, or deals with it in obvious and healthy relations; where the interest turns, not upon what a man shall choose to do, but on how he manages to do it; not on the passionate slips and hesitations of the conscience, but on the problems of the body and of the practical intelligence, in clean, open-air adventure, the shock of arms or the diplomacy of life. With such material as this it is impossible to build a play, for the serious theatre exists solely on moral grounds, and is a standing proof of the dissemination of the human conscience. But it is possible to build, upon this ground, the most joyous of verses, and the most lively, beautiful, and buoyant tales." How would Stevenson's romances fare in the hands of a critic who followed Arnold?

There are critics who object to the ethical interpretation even of tragedy. F. L. Lucas, in a little book on *Tragedy*, says that a tragic drama gives us "the pleasure we take in a rendering of life both serious and true." "This is all," he adds. "It may be good for us, but that is not why we go to it . . . the mind revolts

with a sudden anger at the thought of the besetting meanness of philosophers, who can so seldom be disinterested, who make life a reformatory and art a pill. . . . tragedy may teach us to live more wisely, but that is not why we go to it; we go to have the experience, not to use it."

RACE, ENVIRONMENT, AND EPOCH

Hippolyte Adolphe Taine, a brilliant French critic, made a bold attempt to give validity to critical judgments by applying methods borrowed from the sciences. Taine's methods are explained in the introduction to his history of English literature:

Beneath the shell was an animal and behind the document there was a man. Why do you study the shell unless to form some idea of the animal? In the same way do you study the document in order to comprehend the man; both shell and document are dead fragments and of value only as indications of the complete living being. . . . True history begins when the historian has discerned beyond the mists of ages the living, active man, endowed with passions, furnished with habits, special in voice, feature, gesture, and costume, distinctive and complete, like anybody that you have just encountered in the street. . . .

Given a literature, a philosophy, a society, an art, a certain group of arts, what is the moral state of things which produces it? And what are the conditions of race, epoch, and environment the best adapted to produce this moral state? . . . Just as astronomy, at bottom, is a mechanical problem, and physiology, likewise, a chemical problem, so is history, at bottom, a problem of psychology. . . .

Three different sources contribute to the production of this elementary moral state: race, environment, and epoch. What we call race consists of those innate and hereditary dispositions which man brings with him into the world and which are generally accompanied with marked differences of temperament and of bodily structure. They vary in different nations. Naturally, there are varieties of men as there are varieties of cattle and horses, some brave and intelligent, and others timid and of limited capacity; some capable of superior conceptions and creations, and others reduced to rudimentary ideas and contrivances; some specially fitted for certain works, and more richly furnished with certain instincts, as we see in the better endowed species of dogs, some for running and others for fighting, some for hunting and others for guarding houses and flocks. . . .

When we have thus verified the internal structure of a race, we must consider the environment in which it lives. For man is not alone in the world; nature envelops him and other men surround him; accidental and secondary folds come and overspread the primitive and permanent fold, while physical or social circumstances derange or complete the natural groundwork surrendered to them. At one time climate has had its effect. . . . The profound difference which is apparent between the Germanic races on the one hand, and the Hellenic and Latin races on the other, proceeds in great part from the differences between the countries in which they have established themselves—the former in cold and moist countries, in the depths of gloomy forests and swamps, or on the borders of a wild ocean, confined to melancholic or rude sensations, inclined to drunkenness and gross feeding, leading a militant and carnivorous life; the latter, on the contrary, living amidst the finest scenery, alongside of a brilliant, sparkling sea inviting navigation and commerce, exempt from the grosser cravings of the stomach, disposed at the start to social habits and customs, to political organization, to the sentiments and faculties which

develop the art of speaking, the capacity for enjoyment and invention in the sciences, in art, and in literature. . . .

There is . . . a third order of causes [epoch or moment]. . . . Consider, for example, two moments of a literature or of an art, French tragedy under Corneille and under Voltaire, and Greek drama under Æschylus and under Euripides, Latin poetry under Lucretius and under Claudian, and Italian painting under Da Vinci and under Guido. . . . One of the artists is a precursor and the other a successor. . . . In this respect, it is with a people as with a plant; the same sap at the same temperature and in the same soil produces, at different stages of its successive elaborations, different developments, buds, flowers, fruits, and seeds, in such a way that the condition of the following is always that of the preceding and is born of its death. . . .

Taine's theory is somewhat discredited now, although the influence of science still continues to affect literature and criticism. No one now professes to know just what *race* is. Taine began to generalize too soon; his scientific basis has been proved unsound. There are factors that Taine did not reckon with, and the whole problem is more complex than he thought it. If race, environment, and epoch combined to produce one Shakespeare, why not a dozen? Why was not Christopher Marlowe another Shakespeare? On the other hand, if the infant Shakespeare had died of diphtheria in his cradle, what would have happened to Taine's theory?

And yet critics and literary historians owe a great deal to Taine. If they no longer accept his theory, they at least avail themselves of his general point of view

and method of approaching the problem. They find, like Taine, some explanation of the writer and his work in his social, political, economic, and literary background. Taine's applied criticism is not always injured by the defects of his theory, which often led him to see what other critics had failed to note. More clearly than any English critic except Arnold, Taine saw the defects of the English character and genius in literature. It is worth while to get his point of view. In reviewing Taine's history of English literature, Sainte-Beuve wrote:

So far he remains always outside, letting the thing called individuality of talent, of genius, escape through the meshes of the net, however finely woven. The learned critic attacks and invests it like an engineer: he beleaguers it, blockades it, and narrowly shuts it in under pretext of surrounding all the important outward conditions: those conditions, in fact, serve individuality and personal originality, provoke it and excite it, make it without creating it, more or less able to act and react. That spark which Horace calls divine . . . has not yet yielded to science, and rests unexplained. That is no reason for science to lay down its arms and renounce its courageous enterprise. The siege of Troy lasted ten years; this is one of the problems that will last perhaps as long as the human race itself.

.. THE ADVENTURES OF THE SOUL AMONG MASTERPIECES

A very interesting view is that of Anatole France, novelist and critic, whose views of life and art are those of a kindly skeptic. Everything in life is relative, he

would say; nothing is fixed. The extracts that follow suggest France's view of literature:

I would define a book as a work of magic whence escape all kinds of images to trouble the souls and change the hearts of men. Or, better still, a book is a little magic apparatus which transports us among the images of the past or amidst supernatural shades. . . . The kindly influence of the works of the masters inspires wise discourse, grave and familiar speech, wavering images like garlands constantly broken and constantly reknotted, long reveries, a vague and gentle curiosity that clings to all things but would exhaust none, the memory of what was dear, the forgetfulness of ugly cares and the return to one's own soul.

To Anatole France literature was largely a way of escape. His view of criticism is much what we should expect:

As I understand criticism, it is, like philosophy and history a kind of novel for the use of discreet and curious minds. And every novel, rightly understood, is an autobiography. The good critic is he who relates the adventures of his soul among masterpieces.

There is no such thing as objective criticism any more than there is objective art, and all who flatter themselves that they put aught but themselves into their work are dupes of the most fallacious illusion. . . . We are locked into our persons as into a lasting prison. The best we can do, it seems to me, is gracefully to recognize this terrible situation and to admit that we speak of ourselves every time we have not the strength to be silent.

To be quite frank, the critic ought to say:

"Gentlemen, I am going to talk about myself on the subjects

of Shakespeare, or Racine, or Pascal, or Goethe—subjects that offer me a beautiful opportunity.”

Certain other French critics have taken the same position. Jules Lemaître says, “Whether dogmatic or scientific, literary criticism is never, in the end of things, anything but the personal and perishable work of one wretched man.” Remy de Gourmont regards criticism as a form of rationalizing. “Contrary to the common opinion,” says he, “criticism is perhaps the most subjective of all literary *genres*; it is a perpetual confession. When the critic imagines that he is analyzing the work of others, it is himself that he unveils and exposes to the public.” He would perhaps agree with Oscar Wilde, who said, “Criticism is the only civilized form of autobiography.” “Esthetics is founded on nothing solid,” said Anatole France; “it is a castle in the air.” And again, “There is no single opinion in literature which one cannot easily combat with its precise opposite.”

What do opposing critics have to say of this view of literature and criticism? Of Anatole France, his chief antagonist, Brunetière, remarked, “One cannot affirm with greater assurance that nothing is sure.” France himself did not, however, go so far as complete skepticism: “I have feared the formidable sterility of those two words: ‘I doubt.’ . . . I have believed at least in the relativity of things and in the succession of phenomena.” “It is better to speak of beautiful thoughts and forms with incertitude than to be forever silent.”

As to the danger of rationalizing, Dr. Canby has said: "Men choose their philosophy according to their temperament; so do writers write; and so do critics criticize. Which is by no means to say that criticism is merely an affair of temperament, but rather to assert that temperament must not be left out of account in conducting or interpreting criticism." "Any sort of soul," remarks P. P. Howe, "can have adventures among masterpieces—the lady, for example, who threw a butcher's knife at the Venus of Velasquez. The point at which the adventures begin to interest us is the point at which criticism begins." "In France," says Sainte-Beuve, a great French critic of an earlier day, "the first consideration for us is not whether we are amused or pleased by a work of art or mind, nor is it whether we are touched by it. What we seek above all to learn is, whether *we were right* in being amused with it, and in applauding it, and in being moved by it." That all knowledge is relative, Sainte-Beuve's friend, Matthew Arnold, would admit, but we cannot stop there: "To try and approach truth on one side after another, not to strive or cry, nor to persist in pressing forward, on any one side, with violence and self-will,—it is only thus, it seems to me, that mortals may hope to gain any vision of the mysterious Goddess [of Truth], *whom we shall never see except in outline, but only thus even in outline.*"

THE PASSIONATE FEW

In an interesting discussion of "Why a Classic is a Classic," Arnold Bennett, the English novelist, has expressed a view of literature which on one side resembles that of Anatole France. "Nobody, not even Hazlitt nor Sainte-Beuve," says he, "has ever finally explained why he thought a book beautiful." We are to look, he implies, not at the book but at the reader, for such indefinable words as "truth, insight, knowledge, wisdom, humour, and beauty" will not carry us far.

A classic is a work which gives pleasure to the minority which is intensely and permanently interested in literature. It lives on because the minority, eager to renew the sensation of pleasure, is eternally curious and is therefore engaged in an eternal process of rediscovery. A classic does not survive for any ethical reason. It does not survive because it conforms to certain canons, or because neglect would not kill it. It survives because it is a source of pleasure, and because the passionate few can no more neglect it than a bee can neglect a flower. The passionate few do not read "the right things" because they are right. That is to put the cart before the horse. "The right things" are the right things solely because the passionate few *like* reading them.

There is no doubt that such readers as Milton wished for—"fit audience . . . though few"—do play a large part in making the reputation of a classic; and Bennett's definition of a classic is good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. Of the many qualities that a classic may have, he mentions only one: "It is a

source of pleasure." Why, we ask, is it "a source of pleasure" to the passionate few? Who are the passionate few, and how do they differ from other readers? Is their mental equipment different? Their education? Is it a matter of temperament? May not one belong to the passionate minority in his liking for Shelley and yet be among the barbarians who cannot appreciate Milton and Dante? And the passionate few of one generation are not always passionately fond of the classics of another period. Furthermore, how are you and I to know whether or not we belong to that select minority? Bennett's definition raises more questions than it answers. Some of those which remain unanswered are: What is the function of literature? What is the difference between the books of the hour and the books of all time? What is it in the *Divine Comedy* and the *Iliad* that appeals to the passionate minority of every generation?

ART IMITATES NATURE

The best known and most influential theory of literature comes from Aristotle, to whom Dante referred as "the master of those who know." Aristotle's conception of literature was based upon the Greek epics and dramas, which have never been surpassed in excellence although modern literature has achieved a much greater variety. Aristotle's view is summed up in the sentence, "Art imitates nature." The words *imitation* and *nature* are often understood in senses not

intended by Aristotle. In *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, S. H. Butcher explains in detail what seems to have been Aristotle's meaning. ". . . nature in Aristotle," he says, "is not the outward world of created things; it is the creative force, the productive principle of the universe." "The common original, then, from which all the arts draw is human life,—its mental processes, its spiritual movements, its outward acts issuing from deeper sources; in a word, all that constitutes the inward and essential activity of the soul."

By *imitation* Aristotle did not mean a literal copying of life. "For modern readers," says Lane Cooper in *The Poetics of Aristotle*, "a difficult postulate of Aristotle is that of *imitation*. To us the word suggests a servile copy; we think ill of the artist who is not 'original': the poet should look at things for himself, and express them in his own way. . . . With Aristotle, the artist does look at reality; life is the very thing the poet represents. The painter imitates, not a particular bed or table, but the true idea thereof. 'I have at all times endeavored to look steadily at my subject,' said Wordsworth; he steadily contemplated men in action, and thus imitated universal forms. Aristotle may have no term for our 'creative imagination,' but his concept implies an artistic activity amounting to creative vision."

I quote a part of Butcher's admirable summary of Aristotle's view of art:

A work of art is a likeness or reproduction of an original, and not a symbolic representation of it; and this holds good whether the artist draws from a model in the real world or from an unrealised ideal in the mind. . . .

A work of art reproduces its original, not as it is in itself, but as it appears to the senses. Art addresses itself not to the abstract reason but to the sensibility and image-making faculty; it is concerned with outward appearances; it employs illusions; its world is not that which is revealed by pure thought; it sees truth, but in its concrete manifestations, not as an abstract idea.

. . . To this we must make one addition, which contains the central thought of Aristotle's doctrine. *Imitative art in its highest form, namely poetry, is an expression of the universal element in human life. . . .* The real and the ideal from this point of view are not opposites, as they are sometimes conceived to be. The ideal is the real, but rid of contradictions, unfolding itself according to the laws of its own being, apart from alien influences and the disturbances of chance. . . .

Art, therefore, in imitating the universal imitates the ideal; and we can now describe *a work of art as an idealised representation of human life—of character, emotion, action—under forms manifest to sense.* "Imitation" in the sense in which Aristotle applies the word to poetry, is thus seen to be equivalent to "producing" or "creating according to a true idea." . . .

"Imitation," so understood, is a creative act. It is the expression of the concrete thing under an image which answers to the true idea. To seize the universal, and to reproduce it in simple and sensuous form is not to reflect a reality already familiar through sense perceptions; rather it is a rivalry of nature, a completion of her unfulfilled purposes, a correction of her failures.

The Greek ideal forbids pure realism; that is, explains Professor Butcher, "the literal and prosaic imitation which reaches perfection in a jugglery of the

senses by which the copy is mistaken for the original." Santayana has expressed much the same view: "Fidelity is a merit only because it is . . . a factor in our pleasure. It stands on a level with all other ingredients of effect. When a man raises it to a solitary pre-eminence and becomes incapable of appreciating anything else, he betrays the decay of æsthetic capacity. The scientific habit in him inhibits the artistic."

"The Greek imagination of the classical age is under the strict control of reason," says Professor Butcher, "it is limited by a sense of measure and a faculty of self-restraint." Compare this with John Masefield: "Art is a disciplining of some excitement of the mind. It is a strong excitement in perfect control. It should be an excitement about some permanent element in life. It demands an eagerness of mind, and a balance or steadiness of nature."

"Sanity—" said Matthew Arnold, "that is the great virtue of the ancient literature: the want of that is the great defect of the modern, in spite of all its variety and power." Sanity, symmetry, and universality are the great qualities of Greek art at its best. "For the Greek, genius consists not in getting one's uniqueness uttered," says Irving Babbitt, "but in the imaginative perception of the universal."

Aristotle's conception would, I think, reconcile two widely different passages in Shakespeare. The first is from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact:
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothings
A local habitation and a name.

The second is from Hamlet's advice to the actors:

. . . let your discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for anything so overdone is from [aside from] the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

WHAT IS THE FUNDAMENTAL BASIS OF ALL ART?

The different attitudes of the literary critics lead one to turn to the philosophy of art, esthetics, for an answer as to the fundamental basis of art in general. But the authorities on esthetics do not agree among themselves. In her suggestive *Studies in Recent Æsthetic* Mrs. Gilbert says:

This overwhelming wealth of dissertation and essay and report about the nature of the æsthetic experience contains much that is important and interesting, but inspected in the large resembles a bright crazy-quilt of opinion, with no beginning, middle, or end, no pattern or direction, no mutual understanding or self-consciousness within its four corners. The first impression is that of a motley congeries of clashing dogmatisms, where the need is for a slow, critical, organic effort to grasp a single theme.

The pressure of analysis upon this body of writing reveals at the outset the widespread conviction that, however much philosophers and men of letters may speculate about beauty, it is the experimental psychologists who will settle things.

Perhaps the psychologists will eventually throw new light on the problem, but in the meantime we are driven back upon certain fundamental human instincts as the basis of all art and literature. Art, it would seem, rests upon more than one basic human trait. "The fine arts," said Emerson, "have nothing casual, but spring from the instincts of the nations that created them." The following list of human instincts upon which all art rests is taken from Gayley and Scott's *Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism*. See if you can find the instinct or instincts upon which rests each of the various critical attitudes which we have glanced at in this chapter.

1. Art is the Outgrowth of an Imitative Instinct.
2. Art is the Outgrowth of an Instinct for Self-Expression.
3. Art is the Outgrowth of the Play-Impulse.
4. Art is the Outgrowth of an Instinct for Order.

5. Art is the Outgrowth of an Instinct to Attract Others.
6. Art is the Outgrowth of an Attempt to Repel or Terrify.
7. Art is the Outgrowth of an Impulse to Communicate.
8. Art is the Outgrowth of Festal or Ceremonial [Religious] Celebrations.
9. Art is the Outgrowth of a Desire to Obtain an Image of the Intangible or Spiritual Part of Man.

After studying sympathetically the critical opinions of such able spokesmen as those we have glanced at in this chapter, one is likely to find himself somewhat confused. One would like to agree with them all—which is obviously impossible. What shall one do? Shall one follow the easiest path—in some cases the inevitable—and select that view of literature which fits one's own temperament? To select the very opposite view would broaden one more. In any case, before definitely committing yourself to any one view, examine every view sympathetically and critically. Literature rests upon more than one fundamental human instinct or impulse, and it satisfies more than one human need. If you study carefully the different points of view, you will be less dogmatic and more tolerant. And intolerance is found much more frequently in able critics than it should be. One is often tempted, in reading modern criticism, to take Shelley's vow never to forgive intolerance.

NEITHER LIFE NOR LITERATURE IS REDUCIBLE
TO A FORMULA

It is impossible without great loss to reduce to a formula either life, art, literature, or literary criticism, for they are all, ultimately, indefinable, like love, hate, faith, joy, and sorrow. We know them from experience even if we cannot tell precisely what they are. All critical formulas lack the exactness of the formulas of the scientist. "Poetry is a criticism of life," "Beauty is its own excuse for being," "Art is the expression of impressions" are merely suggestive; they are not mathematically exact like H_2O or $2 + 2 = 4$. In this respect critical formulas are like proverbs. A proverb is a half-truth. To one who does not know how to apply it, a proverbial expression may prove to be a lie. The author of the book of Proverbs in the Bible was aware of this limitation. "Answer not a fool according to his folly lest thou also be like him," he says; and then realizing that this is only half the truth, he adds, "Answer a fool according to his folly lest he be wise in his own conceit." When Matthew Arnold tells us that "poetry is a criticism of life," we should remember that there are beautiful poems, like Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci," Tennyson's "The Lotos-eaters," and Poe's "The City in the Sea," which are based on other conceptions of the function of poetry. In reading Poe, we shall do well to remember his

own definition of poetry as "the Rhythmical creation of Beauty"; and in the case of Keats, we should recall the conclusion of the "Ode on a Grecian Urn:"

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty",—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

The critic's practice is often better than his theory. He cannot reduce his procedure to a formula without loss, nor can he ever finally explain the grounds of his preference of one work of art over another. Although Arnold was somewhat deficient in appreciation of the beauty of form, he undoubtedly did take it into consideration—even if he says nothing about it in his definition of poetry. Arnold's own poems and the passages which he quotes from other poets show that he had some appreciation of the beauty of form.

There is an old saying, "All roads lead to Rome." Any critical formula that is worth anything will lead one to the conclusion that Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe were great poets, for they are great by any reasonable standard. Where we have most difficulty is with the lesser writers, whose range and principles are often narrow. Poe comes out of the esthetic test with flying colors and Emerson withstands the test that literature is "a criticism of life"; but reverse the tests, and you have an entirely different verdict in each case.

In practice, as most of us have observed, it is often

impossible to distinguish *by their actions* Democrat and Republican, Baptist and Methodist, the graduate of Harvard and the graduate of Duke, or Michigan, or Stanford. So it is possible for critics whose expressed conceptions of literature are poles apart to agree in the case of a particular book. It is also possible, unfortunately, for a critic who ought logically to like a certain book to fail completely to appreciate it. George Santayana ought, it seems, to like Walt Whitman, but he does not; while, on the other hand, Robert Louis Stevenson and Stuart P. Sherman, whose views of literature differed radically, agreed that Whitman was a great poet.

In *The Sense of Beauty* Santayana points out "the futility of a dogmatism that would impose upon another man judgments and emotions for which the needed soil is lacking in his constitution and experience:"

There is notoriously no great agreement upon æsthetic matters; and such agreement as there is, is based upon similarity of origin, nature, and circumstance among men, a similarity which, where it exists, tends to bring about identity in all judgments and feelings. It is unmeaning to say that what is beautiful to one man *ought* to be beautiful to another. If their senses are the same, their associations and dispositions similar, then the same thing will certainly be beautiful to both. If their natures are different, the form which to one will be entrancing will be to another even invisible, because his classifications and discriminations in perception will be different, and he may see a hideous detached fragment or a shapeless aggregate of things,

in what to another is a perfect whole—so entirely are the unities of objects unities of function and use. It is absurd to say that what is invisible to a given being *ought* to seem beautiful to him. Evidently this obligation of recognizing the same qualities is conditioned by the possession of the same faculties. But no two men have exactly the same faculties, nor can things have for any two exactly the same values.

May we not say, then, of the philosophy of literature and art what Santayana said of philosophy in general: "The final victory of a single philosophy is not yet won, because none as yet has proved adequate to all experience"?

"The difficulty with theorists about beauty," says Professor A. H. Thorndike, "is that they usually emphasize some aspect or quality to the exclusion of others. The beautiful is the familiar, or it is the novel. Is it the harmonious, the unified, the designed, or is it the vital, the dynamic, the human? It has been identified variously with the useful, the true, and the good. The classicists came near to equating it with the rational, and the romanticists came near to identifying it with ecstasy. I confess that on the matter of definitions I am either a sceptic or an eclectic. I am willing to take all or none of them. In the search for beauty which has gone on through the centuries like the search for truth, I do not see why we do not take gratefully whatever men have found and kept, and yet retain an expectancy of new discovery." A critic of a radically different school, the editor of *The Ameri-*

can Mercury, has taken the same position: "The really competent critic must be an empiricist. He must conduct his exploration with whatever means lie within the bounds of his personal limitation. He must produce his effects with whatever tools will work." Let us briefly notice two great critics who were expert practitioners but not theorists.

HAZLITT AND SAINTE-BEUVE

One of the three things which Keats found to rejoice in was "Hazlitt's depth of taste." Hazlitt was not, in general, a fair critic of his contemporaries; he was too good a hater, and he was unfair to Wordsworth, Coleridge, and others. But apart from this limitation, I would sooner take his verdict than that of any other English critic. His taste was surer than Arnold's, who had many lapses—rating Gray above both Burns and Chaucer, for example. "What Hazlitt had," says P. P. Howe, "was [not learning] but an exquisite sensibility, and unconquerable *sense*." Hazlitt suggests his own method in his essay, "On Criticism": "A genuine criticism should, as I take it, reflect the colours, the light and shade, the soul and body of a work." He was an impressionist with a better balance than most critics of that type. Hazlitt's own tastes and methods are suggested in his account of his friend Joseph Fawcett in the essay, "On Criticism":

The person of the most refined and least contracted taste I ever knew was the late Joseph Fawcett, the friend of my youth. He was almost the first literary acquaintance I ever made, and I think the most candid and unsophisticated. He had a masterly perception of all styles and of every kind and degree of excellence, sublime or beautiful, from Milton's *Paradise Lost* to Shenstone's *Pastoral Ballad*, from Butler's *Analogy* down to Humphry Clinker. If you had a favorite author, he had read him too, and knew all the best morsels, the subtle *traits*, the capital touches. "Do you like Sterne?"—"Yes, to be sure," he would say, "I should deserve to be hanged, if I didn't!" His repeating some parts of *Comus* with his fine, deep, mellow-toned voice, particularly the lines, "I have heard my mother Circe with the Sirens three," &c.—and the enthusiastic comments he made afterward were a feast to the ear and to the soul. He read the poetry of Milton with the same fervour and spirit of devotion that I have since heard others read their own. "That is the most delicious feeling of all," I have heard him exclaim, "to like what is excellent, no matter whose it is." In this respect he practised what he preached. He was incapable of harbouring a sinister motive, and judged only from what he felt. There was no flaw or mist in the clear mirror of his mind. He was as open to impressions as he was strenuous in maintaining them. He did not care a rush whether a writer was old or new, in prose or in verse—"What he wanted," he said, "was something to make him think." Most men's minds are to me like musical instruments out of tune. Touch a particular key, and it jars and makes harsh discord with your own. They like *Gil Blas*, but they can see nothing to laugh at in *Don Quixote*: they adore Richardson, but are disgusted with Fielding. Fawcett had a taste accommodated to all these. He was not exceptionous. He gave a cordial welcome to all sorts, provided they were the best in their kind. . . . A heartier friend or honester critic I never coped withal. He has made me feel (by contrast) the want of genuine sincerity and generous sen-

timent in some that I have listened to since. . . . I would rather be a man of disinterested taste and liberal feeling, to see and acknowledge truth and beauty wherever I found it, than a man of greater and more original genius, to hate, envy, and deny all excellence but my own.

Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve was the greatest of French critics and perhaps the greatest of all time. His friend, Matthew Arnold, wrote of him: "Certain spirits are of an excellence almost ideal in certain lines; the human race might willingly adopt them as its spokesmen, recognising that on these lines their style and utterance may stand as those not of bounded individuals, but of the human race. So Homer speaks for the human race, and with an excellence which is ideal, in epic narration; Plato in the treatment at once beautiful and profound of philosophical questions; Shakespeare in the presentation of human character; Voltaire in light verse and ironical discussion. A list of perfect ones indeed each in his own line; and we may almost venture to add to their number in his line of literary critic, Sainte-Beuve."

Sainte-Beuve had a better combination of taste and judgment than even Hazlitt, and he was fairer. He had keenness of perception. He used various methods but pushed none of them too far. His major criteria, according to Irving Babbitt, were "taste, reality, tradition, and logic and consistency; to which we may add morality as a fifth, though minor one."

An excellent example of Sainte-Beuve's method is seen in his famous essay, "What is a Classic?" A brief summary will reveal something of his critical procedure. He notes that, "A classic, according to the usual definition, is an old author canonised by admiration, and an authority in his particular style." He next comments on the derivation and the history of the word *classic*, and criticizes a definition given in the dictionary of the French Academy as unfair to the Romantic writers. Then he gives his own definition:

A true classic, as I should like to hear it defined, is an author who has enriched the human mind, increased its treasure, and caused it to advance a step; who has discovered some moral and not equivocal truth, or revealed some eternal passion in that heart where all seemed known and discovered; who has expressed his thought, observation, or invention, in no matter what form, only provided it be broad and great, refined and sensible, sane and beautiful in itself; who has spoken to all in his own peculiar style, a style which is found to be also that of the whole world, a style new without neologism, new and old, easily contemporary with all time.

He adds a few other touches: "It should, above all, include conditions of uniformity, wisdom, moderation, and reason, which dominate and contain all the others." "Above all, I should desire not to exclude any one among the worthy; each should be in his place there, from Shakespeare, the freest of creative geniuses and the greatest of the classics without knowing it, to Andrieux, the last of classics in little." "In them would

be seen beauty, proportion in greatness, and that perfect harmony which appears but once in the full youth of the world." "However . . . my meaning is not that we are to imitate those who charm us most among our masters in the past. Let us be content to know them, to penetrate them, to admire them; but let us, the late-comers, endeavour to be ourselves." But, says Sainte-Beuve, "Example is the best definition"; and his examples make the essay much more interesting than any summary of it can possibly indicate. A longer quotation, however, may give a specimen of the quality of the great critic's unfailing taste:

"There is more than one chamber in the mansions of my Father"; that should be as true of the kingdom of the beautiful here below, as of the kingdom of Heaven. Homer, as always and everywhere, should be first, likest a god; but behind him, like the procession of the three wise kings of the East, would be seen the three great poets, the three Homers, so long ignored by us, who wrote epics for the use of the old peoples of Asia, the poets Valmiki, Vyasa of the Hindoos, and Firdousi of the Persians: in the domain of taste it is well to know that such men exist, and not to divide the human race. . . . Solon, Hesiod, Theognis, Job, Solomon—and why not Confucius?—would welcome the cleverest moderns, La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère, who, when listening to them, would say, "They knew all that we know, and in repeating life's experiences, we have discovered nothing." On the hill, most easily discernible, and of most accessible ascent, Virgil, surrounded by Menander, Tibullus, Terence, Fénelon, would occupy himself in discoursing with them with great charm and divine enchantment: his gentle countenance would shine with an inner light, and be tinged with modesty; as on the day when entering the theatre

at Rome, just as they finished reciting his verses, he saw the people rise with an unanimous movement and pay to him the same homage as to Augustus. . . . We see a numerous and familiar company of choice spirits who follow, the Cervantes and Molières, practical painters of life, indulgent friends who are still the first of benefactors, who laughingly embrace all mankind, turn man's experience to gaiety, and know the powerful workings of a sensible, hearty and legitimate joy. I do not wish to make this description, which if complete would fill a volume, any longer. In the middle ages . . . Dante would occupy the sacred heights: at the feet of the singer of Paradise all Italy would be spread out like a garden; Boccaccio and Ariosto would there disport themselves, and Tasso would find again the orange groves of Sorrento. . . .

Such are our classics; each individual may finish the sketch and choose the group preferred. . . .

In fact, be it Horace or another who is the author preferred, who reflects our thoughts in all the wealth of their maturity, of some one of those excellent and antique minds shall we request an interview at every moment; of some one of them shall we ask a friendship which never deceives, which could not fail us; to some one of them shall we appeal for that sensation of serenity and amenity (we have often need of it) which reconciles us with mankind and ourselves.

Most of the great modern critics are French rather than English, as Arnold Bennett points out in *Books and Persons*:

When I think of Pierre Bayle, Sainte-Beuve, and Taine, and of the keen pleasure I derive from the immense pasture offered by their voluminous and consistently admirable works, I ask in vain where are the great English critics of English literature. Beside these French critics, the best of our own seem either fragmentary or provincial—yes, curiously provincial. Except

Hazlitt we have, I believe, no even approximately first-class writer who devoted his main activity to criticism. And Hazlitt, though he is very readable, has neither the urbaneness, nor the science, nor the learning, nor the wide grasp of life and history that characterizes the three above-named. Briefly, he didn't know enough. . . . I wish that some greatly gifted youth now aged about seventeen would make up his mind to be a literary critic and nothing else.

X. APPLIED CRITICISM: POE AND WHITMAN

Authors are partial to their wit, 'tis true,
But are not critics to their judgment too? . . .
Avoid extremes; and shun the fault of such
Who still are pleas'd too little or too much.

ALEXANDER POPE: *Essay on Criticism*.

In this chapter I wish to examine two American poets (omitting their prose works) who are diametrically opposed in their fundamental methods and purposes. Each poet's place in literature, however, is still in dispute. Readers and critics have disagreed about the value of their work ever since they first attracted public attention. If criticism is of practical value, it ought to help us to reach a just estimate of these two poets, who are, historically at least, the two most important in our literature. We shall apply the comparative method to them in the hope that we shall be able to place them approximately.

EDGAR ALLAN POE

Let us judge Poe sympathetically; that is, try to find out what it was he tried to do and judge him first by his success or failure to attain that end. In particular,

do not allow yourself to be influenced by what you know, or think you know, about Poe's life and character. Not only is this the fair thing to do; it is the surest way to discover his characteristic excellences, for Poe had a definite theory of poetry and he followed it closely. Poe states his artistic creed, which we glanced at in the preceding chapter, in "The Poetic Principle" and in "The Philosophy of Composition." The latter is an account of the writing of "The Raven." Although Poe's account is probably not to be accepted literally, it is nevertheless the most brilliant analysis of a short poem that has ever been made. Poe was a thoroughly conscious artist, and he tried to show that, as he puts it, "No one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition,—that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion, with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem."

Poe would not have accepted Arnold's definition of poetry as "a criticism of life." "Its [poetry's] sole arbiter is Taste," he said. "With the Intellect or with the Conscience, it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern either with Duty or with Truth." One cannot reconcile, in poetry, said he, "the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and Truth." Poe protested vigorously against the notion that, "Every poem . . . should inculcate a moral, and by this moral is the poetical merit of the work to be adjudged."

Poe's creed included other items. No poem should be

too long to be read at one sitting; hence there is no such thing as a long poem. Technical qualities are very important. The verse should be musical and the language carefully chosen. Every word should be made to contribute to a definite and preconceived effect or impression which the poet wishes to create.

It is clear that Poe was unconsciously rationalizing when he said there is no such thing as a long poem, for apparently he could not write one himself. Like most other writers, he valued most highly the qualities which he had and underestimated those which he lacked. Of "The Poetic Principle," Hervey Allen remarks, "Like nearly all poetic criticism by poets, it was, in its final analysis, a special and ingenious plea for the kind of poetry he himself wrote."

If one accepts Poe's artistic creed, however, the inescapable conclusion is that he is one of the world's greatest poets. Incidentally, the logic of "The Philosophy of Composition" leads one to the implied conclusion that, unless there is some flaw in the execution, "The Raven" is the best short poem ever written.

What do the critics say of Poe's poetry? In the introduction to his admirable edition of the poems, Professor Killis Campbell gives many widely divergent critical estimates. The significance of their marked disagreement he interprets as follows:

If an explanation be sought of this extraordinary diversity of opinion, it will be found mainly in the world-old difference

among critics as to the province and aims of poetry, the traditional clash between those who insist on the inculcation of moral ideas as the chief business of poetry and those who adhere to the doctrine of art for art's sake. But it will be found in part that not a few of the critics—especially of the earlier critics—have allowed themselves to be influenced in their judgments by what they knew—or believed themselves to know—about the irregularities of Poe's life and character; and in part, also, by the fact that a number of the critics have based their judgments of Poe, as most laymen do to-day, on only a few of the poems, the better-known *Raven* and *Annabel Lee*, ignoring such poems as *Israfel*, *The City in the Sea*, and *The Sleeper*, certainly as richly poetic as anything that Poe wrote.

In other words, a critic's estimate of Poe depends largely upon whether or not he agrees with Poe's theory of poetry. Poe's creed is more congenial to the French than to the English-speaking peoples; and his reputation in France is higher than elsewhere for that reason. Baudelaire almost made a god of Poe; Gautier praised him, so did Victor Hugo and many others. The French also place a higher value upon technical excellence, and they care less for moral values in literature than we do. Again, those poets who emphasize the musical element in verse, in which Poe excelled, have given Poe a high rating; Tennyson, Swinburne, and Yeats, in particular, have praised him as one of the most musical poets.

The New England writers, under the sway of the Puritan tradition in literature, have underestimated Poe. Emerson dubbed him "the jingle man." But not

all his hostile critics have been New Englanders. Henry James, a realist, missing the tang of real life in Poe's romantic poems, referred to them as "very valueless verses"—later changing "valueless" to "superficial." Walt Whitman assigned to Poe a place among "the electric lights of imaginative literature, brilliant and dazzling, but with no heat." W. C. Brownell found that Poe's works "lack the elements not only of great, but of real, literature" [substance] and hence are "essentially valueless."

In short, one could go to Tolstoy's *What is Art?* or Arnold's "The Study of Poetry," or Anatole France's "The Adventures of the Soul," and, without further basis, determine what those critics would have thought of Poe (if they were logical). I would give a good deal, however, for a critical essay on Poe written by Hazlitt or Sainte-Beuve.

What is one to do when the critics violently disagree? The comparative method of criticism suggests several things, some of which are exemplified in J. M. Robertson's essay on Poe in his *New Essays toward a Critical Method*. A study of the critical estimates shows that, as Professor Campbell points out, the critics are agreed upon certain points: that Poe's poems are highly individual and thoroughly original; that they are almost the perfection of verbal music; that Poe was a very skilful artist; that his poems are few and his best poems fewer still; and that his range in form and subject mat-

ter is very narrow. This at least is something tangible; it is not worth while to labor these points further.

Perhaps a just conclusion would be that, although Poe is an almost flawless minor poet, his limitations of range, subject, and appeal prevent our rating him as a major poet. He does not withstand all tests like a great poet. We should assign him a place not with Shakespeare and Dante, not even with Wordsworth and Keats, but with a poet like Thomas Gray, who, like Poe, wrote a handful of exquisite poems, one of which is more widely known than even "The Raven."

But in criticism one should never lose sight of the man's work. Let us compare Poe's "To Helen" with the following poem by Byron:

SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

TO HELEN

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicéan barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land!

The comparison is not altogether fair to Byron, whose merits are seen more clearly in the longer poems; but the juxtaposition of the two poems does emphasize the perfection of Poe's technique. His poem has a subtler music than Byron's, and is in every way a more finished work of art. Poe's lines suggest much more than they say, and for beauty and finish they

would be difficult to match in all Byron's poems. The latter's poem has, however, more human significance than Poe's. One feels that Byron is interested in the person he is describing, while Poe, apparently, is chiefly concerned with suggesting the feeling that the sight of Helen's classic beauty gives him.

Let us compare Poe's "To Helen" with Homer's famous tribute to the beauty of Helen of Troy in the third book of the *Iliad*; the translation is by Lang, Leaf, and Myers:

Forthwith she [Helen] veiled her face in shining linen, and hastened from her chamber, letting fall a round tear; not unattended, for there followed with her two handmaidens, Aithre, daughter of Pittheus, and ox-eyed Klymene. Then came she straightway to the place of the Skaian gates. And they that were with Priam and Panthoos and Thymoites and Lampos and Klytios and Hiketaon of the stock of Ares, Oukalegon withal and Antenor, twain sages, being elders of the people, sat at the Skaian gates. These had now ceased from battle for old age, yet were they right good orators, like grasshoppers that in a forest sit upon a tree and utter their lily-like [delicate or tender] voice; even so sat the elders of the Trojans upon the tower. Now when they saw Helen coming to the tower they softly spake winged words one to the other: "Small blame is it that the Trojans and well-greaved Achaians [Greeks] should for such a woman long time suffer hardships; marvellously like is she to the immortal goddesses to look upon. Yet even so, though she be so goodly, let her go upon their ships and not stay to vex us and our children after us."

No translation of Homer of course is adequate, and yet the English reader should be able to see something

of the wonderful skill with which Homer, without describing Helen at all, makes us feel her great beauty by describing its effect upon these unsusceptible old men. Marlowe imitated Homer's method in the famous lines:

Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

In Homer we find not merely great art but art that has profound human significance. The comparison with Homer reduces Poe to his proper place among the minor poets.

One might apply Arnold's touchstone method to Poe. Let us compare two fine lines in "To Helen" with some great lines of other poets:

To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

This is from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

And this from Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey:"

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

Here is the conclusion of Tennyson's "Ulysses":

Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are:
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

This is from Satan's speech near the beginning of Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

What though the field be lost?
All is not lost—the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield:
And what is else not to be overcome.

From Emerson's "The Problem":

Earth proudly wears the Parthenon
As the best gem upon her zone,
And Morning opes with haste her lids
To gaze upon the Pyramids;

O'er England's abbeys bends the sky,
As on its friends, with kindred eye;
For out of Thought's interior sphere
These wonders rose to upper air;
And Nature gladly gave them place,
Adopted them into her race,
And granted them an equal date
With Andes and with Ararat.

Let us have Poe's lines again:

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Poe, it seems to me, holds his own with Emerson and perhaps with Tennyson, but not with the greater poets. The touchstone method, however, is not scientific but merely suggestive. It may help you to place a poet—if your ear is true and your taste catholic.

WALT WHITMAN

Professor Emory Holloway says in his excellent life of Whitman:

Like many a prophet and innovator, he has been the storm center of controversies some of which bear only accidental relations to the man himself. And though his genius is today generally recognized by the intelligent, many opinions obtain as to his personal character, his philosophic teachings, his artistic importance. Thoreau, Moncure Conway, Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke, and John Burroughs found in Whitman something of

the demi-god. Stevenson and John Addington Symonds discovered in him a sadly needed tonic for the anæmia of too much civilization. Many modern poets, sculptors, and painters found in him an inspiring crusader of art. Emerson, the first to praise him, at once greeted him "at the beginning of a great career." Yet there have been those who could describe him as neither poet nor philosopher, while others have sought to show that his life was immoral and his mentality abnormal. . . . In any case, he is a literary figure almost unique in his strange blending of oriental and occidental influences, his absorbing of a country as yet ununified in its temper and its ambition, his equal relish for the classical and the romantic, his realism and his mystic idealism, his childish naïveté and his profound and far-seeing faith.

Let us examine two striking critical views of Whitman's poetry. A very unfavorable estimate is found in a brilliant essay by George Santayana, a philosopher, a poet, and a master of English prose without a parallel among living American writers. In "The Poetry of Barbarism" he attacks Whitman and Browning as poets of barbarism. One suspects the critic at first of perpetrating a humorous paradox, but Santayana is in deadly earnest:

It is an observation at first sight melancholy but in the end, perhaps, enlightening, that the earliest poets are the most ideal, and that primitive ages furnish the most heroic characters and have the clearest vision of a perfect life. . . . The poetry of that simple and ignorant age [the age of Homer] was, accordingly, the sweetest and sanest that the world has known; the most faultless in taste, and the most even and lofty in inspiration. . . . Nowhere else can we find so noble a rendering

of human nature, so spontaneous a delight in life, so uncompromising a dedication to beauty, and such a gift of seeing beauty in everything. Homer, the first of poets, was also the best and the most poetical. . . . From this beginning, if we look down the history of Occidental literature, we see the power of idealization steadily decline.

Santayana is here echoing Macaulay: "We think that, as civilisation advances, poetry almost necessarily declines," or Thomas Love Peacock, who called forth Shelley's admirable "Defence of Poetry" by saying: "A poet in our times is a semi-barbarian in a civilized community. . . . His ideas, thoughts, feelings, associations are all with barbarous manners, obsolete customs, and exploded superstitions. . . . The highest inspirations of poetry are resolvable into three ingredients: the rant of unregulated passion, the whining of exaggerated feeling, and the cant of factitious sentiment. . . . It can never make a philosopher, nor a statesman, nor in any class of life a useful or rational man." Santayana's description of the modern poetry of barbarism sounds like Plato's objection to the poets: "Poetry feeds and waters the passions instead of withering and starving them; she lets them rule instead of ruling them. We recognize at last what Plato himself called "the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry."

Although Santayana's essay was published in book form in 1900, the following applies with equal force to much of the poetry of our own generation: "We find

our contemporary poets incapable of any high wisdom, incapable of any imaginative rendering of human life and its meaning. Our poets are things of shreds and patches; they give us episodes and studies, a sketch of this curiosity, a glimpse of that romance; they have no total vision, no grasp of the whole reality." We have thrown overboard our heritage of Greek and Christian culture and relapsed into a semi-pagan barbarism. Santayana believes in tradition, discipline, restraint; and Whitman's rebellion against all these arouses his wrath. Santayana looks to poetry, like Arnold, for the powerful application of ideas to life, and he does not find it. As a matter of fact, Santayana simply misses the deepest philosophic implications in Whitman, or ignores them because Whitman's philosophy is so far removed from his own.

The elements to which Browning reduces experience are still passions, characters, persons; Whitman carries the disintegration further and knows nothing but moods and particular images. . . . In Whitman imagination was limited to marshaling sensations in single file. . . . We find the swarms of men and women rendered as they might strike the retina in a sort of waking dream. . . . Whitman has gone back to the innocent style of Adam, when the animals filed before him one by one and he called each of them by its name . . . with Whitman the surface is absolutely all. . . . He basked in the sunshine of perception and wallowed in the stream of his own sensibility. . . . The world [of Whitman] has no inside; it is a phantasmagoria of continuous visions, vivid, impressive, but monotonous and hard to distinguish in memory, like the waves

of the sea or the decorations of some barbarous temple, sublime only by the infinite aggregation of parts.

Santayana does grant Whitman "profound inspiration" and a "genuine courage," and he admits that he is representative; but apparently he overlooks the passage which we quoted from his *The Sense of Beauty* in the preceding chapter: "It is unmeaning to say that what is beautiful to one man *ought* to be beautiful to another," etc. Whitman is romantic, pantheistic, and permeated with mysticism. Santayana is none of these things. He is a philosopher, an aristocrat, a classicist, and the author of *The Life of Reason* in five volumes. Here is his estimate of mysticism, which places intuition above reason:

The mystics who declare that to God there is no distinction in the value of things, and that only our human prejudice makes us prefer a rose to an oyster, or a lion to a monkey, have, of course, a reason for what they say. If we could strip ourselves of our human nature, we should undoubtedly find ourselves incapable of making these distinctions, as well as of thinking, perceiving, or willing in any way which is now possible to us. But how things would appear to us if we were not human is, to a man, a question of no importance. Even the mystic to whom the definite constitution of his own mind is so hateful, can only paralyze without transcending his faculties. . . . What is true of mysticism in general, is true also of its manifestation in æsthetics. If we could so transform our taste as to find beauty everywhere, because, perhaps, the ultimate nature of things is as truly exemplified in one thing as in another, we should, in fact, have abolished taste altogether. . . . When we try to make our judgments absolute, what we do is

to surrender our natural standards and categories, and slip into another genus, until we lose ourselves in the satisfying vagueness of mere being.

Compare Santayana's estimate of mysticism with that found in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*:

The writings of these Mystics acted in no slight degree to prevent my mind from being imprisoned within the outline of any single dogmatic system. They contributed to keep alive the heart in the head; gave me an indistinct, yet stirring and working presentiment, that all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of death, and were as the rattling twigs and sprays in winter, into which a sap was yet to be propelled from some root to which I had not penetrated, if they were to afford my soul either food or shelter. If they were too often a moving cloud of smoke to me by day, yet they were always a pillar of fire throughout the night, during my wanderings through the wilderness of doubt, and enabled me to skirt, without crossing, the sandy deserts of utter unbelief.

Santayana has not judged Whitman by what the poet set out to do. An estimate of Whitman based upon his own creed would lead to a very different conclusion from that which Santayana reached. Here is the excellent summary of Whitman's critical creed found in Norman Foerster's *American Criticism*:

There are many kinds of literature, because each age interprets life in its own special way; and each kind has its validity. Yet there is a best kind, not as yet realized. Broadly speaking all the past kinds are expressions of feudalism and superstition. By virtue of the law of progress, the new age now dawning, the age of democracy and science, will be the best, and its literature will be the best. Therefore it is impossible to formu-

late the characteristics of the best literature on the basis of any literature already produced. Looking to the future rather than the past, the critic must be a revolutionary and a prophet. In formulating the new theory, such a critic will be guided by the characteristics of the age, as they are coming to clearness in America. These characteristics are, in the first place, Democracy, which is faith in the common man, belief in the greatness of spiritual individuality; and, in the second place, Science, which is faith in nature, belief in the glory of the physical. From these two is now being born a new religion, greater than either the Greek or the Hebrew. The function of the literature of the future will be to bring on the new age and eventually to give it full expression. And its law of expression must be natural—organic. The mode of expression suited to the régime of feudalism is becoming anachronistic, and we must now envisage a new mode suited to the régime of Democracy and Science.

Stuart P. Sherman took issue with Santayana in an essay prefixed to the Modern Student's Library edition of *Leaves of Grass*:

Whitman's mind proves him a far more complex phenomenon than most of the critics have acknowledged. Mr. George Santayana represents him as a kind of placid animal wallowing unreflectively in the stream of his own sensations. This view of him may indeed be supported by reference to certain of his passages which express with unwise exuberance his delight in the reports of his senses. . . . But to represent Whitman as exclusively or finally preoccupied with the life of the senses is not to represent him whole. It is to ignore a fact which flames from the completed *Leaves of Grass*, namely, that he is one of the "twice-born"—that he had a new birth in the spirit of the Civil War and a rebaptism in its blood. . . . That Whitman emerged from the warm shallows of his individual sensibility, that he immersed himself in the spiritual undercurrents of the

national life—this significant alteration of his position is established by his conduct and temper in the war.

Sherman finds Whitman's thought very significant; he is "important to the American people as the poetic interpreter of their political and social ideals." "What nature has overlooked and neglected or inadequately attended to," he says, "is the development of those feelings which fit men to live harmoniously in complex civil societies. So that the special task for those who [like Whitman] would ameliorate our modern world is to bring forward and glorify an order of emotions quite unknown to the Cave Man—a mutual understanding and imaginative sympathy which begin to develop and operate only when the elementary urges of our nature have been checked and subdued by a reflective culture." So Sherman, quite unlike Santayana, finds Whitman's thought of very great value.

How do I know that he is a great poet? [asks Sherman]. Not merely because such judges as Emerson, Tennyson, and Swinburne have acknowledged his power. Not because he has achieved a wide international reputation and translations into French, Dutch, Danish, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish. The great court of glory has pronounced unmistakably in his favor; and this award fortifies, to be sure, the individual judgment. But there is another very simple test, which, for some reason or other, is seldom applied to our contemporary verse. What is the purpose and the effect of great poetry—of Homer, the *Psalms*, *Beowulf*, the *Song of Roland*, the *Divine Comedy*, *Richard III*, *Paradise Lost*? It is to raise man in the midst of his common life above the level of his ordinary emotion by

filling him with a sentiment of his importance as a moral being and of the greatness of his destiny. Does Whitman's poetry accomplish that end? It does, and it will continue to do so with increases of power as the depth and sweep of his book, its responses to a wide range of need, become familiar in the sort of daily exploration through a number of years, in dull times and crucial, which such a book can repay.

Sherman applies two other tests:

"In Homer and Shakespeare," says Whitman truly, one will find a "certain heroic ecstasy, which, or the suggestion of which, is never absent in the works of the masters." That heroic ecstasy is present in Whitman himself. There is not a page of him in which he does not impart it. . . . In nothing does a man measure himself more decisively than in his judgment of other men. Whitman has an instinct and talent for recognizing the heroic in literature, in history, among his own contemporaries. He recognizes it in Christ, in Lincoln, in the nameless crumpled corpse amid the débris of battle; and he responds to it with the adoration of a kindred spirit. This is a decisive test of his quality. This instinct keeps him near the central stream of our national life, an unperturbed and reassuring pilot in misty weather. In recognition of this virtue in him I choose for my last word this line of his:

"The years straying toward infidelity he withholds by
his steady faith."

I do not have space to summarize Stevenson's excellent essay on Whitman; I give instead this significant sentence from his "Books Which Have Influenced Me:"

I come next to Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, a book of singular service, a book which tumbled the world upside down for me, blew into space a thousand cobwebs of genteel and ethical illu-

sion, and, having thus shaken my tabernacle of lies, set me back again upon a strong foundation of all the original and manly virtues.

But criticism must never lose sight of the thing criticized. Read the following passage from the "Song of Myself" in the light of what Santayana and Sherman say of Whitman and compare your own impression with theirs:

A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full hands,
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark, and say, *Whose?*

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,
Growing among black folks as among white,
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same,
I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken
 soon out of their mothers' laps,
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old
 mothers,
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths
 for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men
 and women,
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring
 taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?
And what do you think has become of the women and chil-
 dren?

They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait
 at the end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and
 luckier.

Do you see in this selection anything to justify the estimate of *Leaves of Grass* expressed in Emerson's famous letter to Whitman, written when Whitman was quite obscure?

Dear Sir,—I am not blind to the worth of the wonderful gift of "Leaves of Grass." I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed. I am very happy in reading it, as great power makes us happy. It meets the demand I am always making of what seems the sterile and stingy Nature, as if too much handiwork or too much lymph in the temperament were making our Western wits fat and mean. I give you joy of your free and brave thought. I have great joy in it. I find incomparable things, said incomparably well, as they must be. I find the courage of treatment which so delights us, and which large perception only can inspire.

I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere for such a start. I rubbed my eyes a little to see if this sunbeam were no illusion; but the solid sense of the book is a sober certainty. It has the best merits, namely, of fortifying and encouraging. . . .

Let us apply the touchstone method to Whitman, this time giving his poem last. All of the selections deal with war in one way or another. The first is from the description of the tournament in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*:

The heraudes lefte hir [their] priking up and doun;
Now ringen trompes loude and clarioun;
There is namore to seyn, but west and est
In goon the speres ful sadly in arest;
In goth the sharpe spore in-to the syde.
Ther seen men who can juste, and who can ryde;

Ther shiveren shaftes up-on sheeldes thikke;
He feeleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke.
Up springen speares twenty foot on highte;
Out goon the swerdes as the silver brighte.
The helmes they to-hewen and to-shrede;
Out brest the blood, with sterne stremes rede.
With mighty maces the bones they to-breste.
He thurgh the thikkeste of the throng can threste.
Ther stomblen stedes stronge, and doun goth al.

The next passage is from Shakespeare's *Othello*:

Farewell the plumèd troop and the big wars
That make ambition virtue! O, farewell,
Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,
The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
The royal banner, and all quality,
Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!
And, O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
The immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,
Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone!

The following selection is from the thirty-ninth chapter of the book of *Job*—no finer free verse was ever written:

Has thou given the horse strength?
Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?
Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper?
The glory of his nostrils is terrible.
He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength:
He goeth on to meet the armed men.
He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted;
Neither turneth he back from the sword.
The quiver rattleth against him,
The glittering spear and the shield.

He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage:
Neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.
He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha;
And he smelleth the battle afar off,
The thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

This is from Scott's description of the battle of Flodden Field in *Marmion*:

By this, though deep the evening fell,
Still rose the battle's deadly swell,
For still the Scots around their king,
Unbroken, fought in desperate ring.
Where's now their victor va'ward wing,
Where Huntley, and where Home?
Oh! for a blast of that dread horn,
On Fontarabian echoes borne,
That to King Charles did come,
When Rowland brave, and Olivier,
And every paladin and peer
On Roncesvalles died!
Such blasts might warn them, not in vain,
To quit the plunder of the slain
And turn the doubtful day again,
While yet on Flodden side
Afar the Royal Standard flies,
And round it toils and bleeds and dies
Our Caledonian pride!

And now read Whitman's "Beat! Beat! Drums!"

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Through the windows—through doors—burst like a ruthless
force,
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,
Into the school where the scholar is studying;

Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have
now with his bride,
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or
gathering his grain,
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you bugles
blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the
streets;
Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no
sleepers must sleep in those beds,
No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—
would they continue?
Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?
Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the
judge?
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,
Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie await-
ing the hearses,
So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you bugles
blow.

While this poem is not Whitman's very best, it is certainly above his average. Of Whitman's verse in general Stevenson said, "The result is a most surprising compound of plain grandeur, sentimental affectation, and downright nonsense." I think more highly

of Whitman, and yet it is clear that Whitman is no Homer and no Shakespeare. He is like Poe in that he does not emerge from all tests with flying colors. He and Poe are probably the two major American poets, but neither is a poet of first rank by international standards.

Can you read both Poe and Whitman with understanding and delight, and yet not overrate either at the expense of the other? If you can, your taste is more catholic than that of the great majority of readers and literary critics.

XI. DETECTING THE FALSE; RECOGNIZING THE GENUINE

The value of sound literary criticism lies in its ability to recognize impostors.

ARNOLD WHITRIDGE.

In their flashes of insight taste and genius are one.

J. E. SPINGARN.

Any critical method, to prove of value to the reader, must help us to do two things. First, it should help us to detect the false, the insincere, the trashy; it should help us to discover defects of observation, fact, thought, structure, and style. No one wishes to admire what may be found to be unworthy, even in Shakespeare or Homer; and every great writer has inferior passages which ought not to be admired without reservation; even Homer nods. Criticism should help us, in the second place, to find an author's distinguishing excellences.

Common sense and close study will reveal many merits and faults, especially in fidelity, or the lack of fidelity, to life. But mere common sense is not always sufficient. Common sense does not help us very much in the effort to appreciate certain types of music, painting, or literature. Study and continual practice, how-

ever, add to one's understanding and appreciation of literature as they do in the case of anything else.

THE INSINCERE

One hall-mark of great literature, as of great men, is sincerity; it is as essential in literature as in life. Insincerity in literature is not, however, quite the same thing as personal insincerity, and it is often not easy to distinguish from its opposite. Many a man whose life is characterized by integrity is unable to write as simply and as honestly as he lives and talks. When he takes a pen in hand, he becomes imitative, conventional, theatrical, bombastic, sentimental, moralistic. Such literary insincerity is all the more insidious since it is unintentional and usually quite unconscious. Even the trained writer has to guard against this fault. He should keep his eye on the object and write only what he sees and feels; and he should write in a manner natural to himself and appropriate to the subject. It is not always easy, however, for a writer to know his own mind and heart. It is too easy to fancy that he feels and thinks what men expect him to think and feel. Sometimes a novelist, having written a sincere book which proved popular, may in trying to repeat his success, write what he only half feels. I suspect Dickens of writing some pathetic passages in his later novels mainly because the public had liked that kind of writing in his earlier books. When Byron, as Matthew Arnold puts it,

bore,
With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,
Through Europe to the Ætolian shore
The pageant of his bleeding heart,

obviously he did it partly for effect; and yet Byron was such a combination of contradictory impulses that it is difficult to make sure when he is insincere.

THE SENTIMENTAL

Among uncritical readers, the genuine is most often confused with the sentimental. By sentimentality we mean sentiment or feeling which is partly or wholly insincere. It is the source of much bad writing, and it is found in life as well as in art. The sentimental person responds to emotional stimuli which are conventional and inadequate; and he responds automatically, like a slot machine. He never knows the difference between what he feels and what he thinks he ought to feel. His emotions are vague and hazy, not attached so much to specific things as to certain large classes of things. He may not be a particularly dutiful son, but when some speaker or writer refers to motherhood, he responds with a gush of sentiment. He may not be a good father to his own children, but when some one talks or writes about the sweet, innocent little children, he feels a vague suffusing glow of emotion—not an emotion connected with any particular child and not the kind of emotion likely to find an outlet in any worthy action.

Politicians, journalists, editors, the writers of best sellers—all play upon our sensibilities. When the sentimental person reads a novel, the process is likely to be an emotional debauch; the reader never suspects—what is probably the truth—that the characters are impossible, the action unreal, the dialogue unnatural, and the whole tone false. In an interesting essay on “Sentimental America,” Dr. Canby says:

When a critic, after a course in American novels and magazines, declares that life, as it appears on the printed page here, is fundamentally sentimentalized, he goes much deeper than “mushiness” with his charge. He means, I think, that there is an alarming tendency in American fiction to dodge the facts of life—or to pervert them. He means that in most popular books only red-blooded, optimistic people are welcome. He means that material success, physical soundness, and the gratification of the emotions have the right of way. He means that men and women (except the comic figures) shall be presented, not as they are, but as we should like to have them, according to a judgment tempered by nothing more searching than our experience with an unusually comfortable, safe, and prosperous mode of living. Everyone succeeds in American plays and stories—if not by good thinking, why then by good looks or good luck.

Let us examine a poem written a century ago, for an archaic brand of sentimentality is easier to recognize than a contemporary type. The poem, which has some merit, is Thomas Moore’s “Believe Me if All Those Endearing Young Charms”:

Believe me, if all those endearing young charms
Which I gaze on so fondly to-day,
Were to change by to-morrow, and fleet in my arms,
Like fairy-gifts fading away,
Thou wouldst still be adored, as this moment thou art,
Let thy loveliness fade as it will;
And around the dear ruin each wish of my heart
Would entwine itself verdantly still.

It is not while beauty and youth are thine own,
And thy cheeks unprofaned by a tear,
That the fervor and faith of a soul may be known
To which time will but make thee more dear;
No, the heart that has truly loved never forgets,
But as truly loves on to the close,
As the sunflower turns on her god when he sets
The same look which she turned when he rose.

If you cannot see that this poem is sentimental, turn it into prose and see just what it is that the young man says to his sweetheart. It is something like this: "My dear, if you were old and ugly—with false teeth and thin gray hair—I should love you just as much as I do now." The young man probably thinks he means what he says, but he knows perfectly well that tomorrow his sweetheart will look just as charming as she looks today. He is safe in boasting of the enduring quality of his love, for no one can disprove what he says. But he says too much. The shrewd reader will discount everything he says. It is much better to say less than one feels. Compare Moore's poem with Burns's "John Anderson," which Professor Neilson calls "the classical

expression of love in age, inimitable in its simplicity and tenderness”:

John Anderson, my jo, John,
When we were first acquent,
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bonnie brow was brent;
But now your brow is beld, John,
Your locks are like the snaw;
But blessings on your frosty pow,
John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither;
And mony a canty day, John,
We've had with ane anither:
Now we maun totter down, John,
And hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson, my jo.

The method of art, as Tolstoy pointed out, is infectious; but in art, as in life, simplicity and restraint are more effective than exaggeration, as Hamlet explained in his advice to the actors: “Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus; but use all gently: for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. Oh, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who, for the most part, are capable of

nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it."

But one cannot altogether rule out sentiment in poetry. The poet may, if he wishes, develop an idea which is only a half-truth for the beauty in it. Even if he does not see life steadily and see it whole, he may be true to what he genuinely feels at the moment. Here is a sonnet by Shakespeare which, in content, bears a striking resemblance to Moore's poem. It is not perhaps poetry of the highest type, but it is an excellent sonnet.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixèd mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

FAULTS OF STRUCTURE AND STYLE

The reader whose feeling for literary form is untrained will often take for genuine what is in struc-

ture crude or badly proportioned and what in style is stilted, artificial, or imitative. There is an enormous difference between the best and the poorest passages in almost any great author. Shakespeare is notoriously uneven, and so is Scott. In the closing pages of "A Gossip on Romance," Stevenson points out some of Scott's merits and faults from the point of view of a skilful craftsman:

Walter Scott is out and away the king of the romantics. . . . The same strength and the same weaknesses adorn and disfigure the novels [as the poems]. . . . In *Guy Mannering*, again, every incident is delightful to the imagination; and the scene when Harry Bertram lands at Ellangowan is a model instance of romantic method.

"'I remember the tune well,' he says, 'though I cannot guess what should at present so strongly recall it to my memory.' He took his flageolet from his pocket and played a simple melody. Apparently the tune awoke the corresponding associations of a damsel. . . . She immediately took up the song—

" 'Are these the links of Forth, she said;
Or are they the crooks of Dee,
Or the bonny woods of Warroch Head
That I so fain would see?'

" 'By heaven!' said Bertram, 'it is the very ballad.' "

On this quotation two remarks fall to be made. First, as an instance of modern feeling for romance, this famous touch of the flageolet and the old song is selected by Miss Braddon for omission. . . . The second point is still more curious. The reader will observe a mark of excision in the passage as quoted by me. Well, here is how it runs in the original: "A damsel who, close behind a fine spring about half-way down

the descent, and which had once supplied the castle with water, was engaged in bleaching linen." A man who gave in such copy would be discharged from the staff of a daily paper. Scott has forgotten to prepare the reader for the presence of the "damsel"; he has forgotten to mention the spring and its relation to the ruin; and now, face to face with his omission, instead of trying back and starting fair, crams all this matter, tail foremost, into a single shambling sentence. It is not merely bad English, or bad style; it is abominably bad narrative besides.

The style and versification of Tennyson have been highly and justly praised, but Tennyson had nevertheless an uncertain feeling for the appropriate style. While his "Ulysses" and "Morte D'Arthur" are practically perfect of their kind, other poems reveal an inability to strike or maintain the right stylistic note. In "Dora" he aimed at the seemingly artless simplicity of the Old Testament narratives which Wordsworth successfully followed in his "Michael." In comparing the two poems, Matthew Arnold suggested the difference by applying to "Michael" the French word, *simplicité*, genuine simplicity, and to "Dora," *simplesse*, artificial or false simplicity.

"Enoch Arden" is another attempt in the idyllic style. The poem has some fine lines which would be appropriate in "Morte D'Arthur," but the epic note seems distinctly out of place here:

From the dread sweep of the down-streaming seas.

And the low moan of leaden-colour'd seas.

No sail from day to day, but every day
The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts
Among the palms and ferns and precipices;
The blaze upon the waters to the east;
The blaze upon his island overhead;
The blaze upon the waters to the west;
Then the great stars that globed themselves in heaven,
The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again
The scarlet shafts of sunrise—but no sail.

Here is Tennyson's attempt at the simple style:

Here on this beach a hundred years ago,
Three children of three houses, Annie Lee,
The prettiest little damsel in the port,
And Philip Ray, the miller's only son,
And Enoch Arden, a rough sailor's lad
Made orphan by a winter shipwreck, play'd
Among the waste and lumber of the shore.

The men and women all behave too much in accordance with Victorian notions of propriety. In Masfield's "The Daffodil Fields" we have nearly the same situation, but Masfield's characters act far more naturally than Tennyson's. Only once or twice in Tennyson's poem does the pathos of the situation really move the reader of today. We only smile when Philip says to Annie:

Take your own time, Annie, take your own time.

Enoch's death is not badly done, but the concluding line is among the worst that Tennyson ever wrote:

Then the third night after this,
While Enoch slumber'd motionless and pale,
And Miriam watch'd and dozed at intervals,
There came so loud a calling of the sea,
That all the houses in the haven rang.
He woke, he rose, he spread his arms abroad,
Crying with a loud voice, "A sail! a sail!
I am saved"; and so fell back and spoke no more.

So past the strong heroic soul away.
And when they buried him, the little port
Had seldom seen a costlier funeral.

CRITICAL INSIGHT

There is no simple method of getting at the specific excellences of a writer. Sometimes it helps us to find his defects, which may be merely desirable qualities misdirected. Thus the didacticism of some English and American poets results from a moral earnestness which should be expressed less directly. If Scott is careless, he is also spontaneous; if Byron writes hastily, his poems have fire and movement; if Burns's lyrics are less highly polished than Gray's, they show more feeling.

To get at an author's special merits requires insight, a gift which is easier to illustrate than to define. It is a quality which the biographer needs as much as the literary critic. Often one can understand better the significance of the man's work when one has studied his life closely. Goldsmith's remark to Johnson shows that he knew the man Johnson as well as his writings: "Why, Dr. Johnson . . . if you were to make

little fishes talk, they would talk like WHALES." A few pages back we quoted Stevenson on the shortcomings of Scott; it is only fair to quote his conclusion here:

We have a man of the finest creative instinct touching with perfect certainty and charm the romantic junctures of his story, and we find him utterly careless, almost, it would seem, incapable, in the technical matter of style, and not only frequently weak, but frequently wrong in points of drama. In character parts, indeed, and particularly in the Scotch, he was delicate, strong, and truthful; but the trite, obliterated features of his heroes have already wearied two generations of readers. At times his characters will speak with something far beyond propriety with a true heroic note; but on the next page they will be wading wearily forward with an ungrammatical and undramatic rigmarole of words. The man who could conceive and write the character of Elspeth of the Craighburnfoot, as Scott has conceived and written it, had not only splendid romantic, but splendid tragic gifts. How comes it, then, that he could so often fob us off with languid, inarticulate twaddle?

It seems to me that the explanation is to be found in the very quality of his surprising merits. As his books are play to the reader, so were they play to him. He conjured up the romantic with delight, but he had hardly patience to describe it. He was a great day-dreamer, a seer of fit and beautiful and humorous visions, but hardly a great artist; hardly, in the manful sense, an artist at all. He pleased himself, and so he pleases us. Of the pleasures of his art he tasted fully; but of its toils and vigils and distresses never man knew less. A great romantic—an idle child.

Even the unsympathetic critic may possess insight. Here is Taine's view of the writings of Samuel Johnson:

We wish to know what ideas have made him popular. Here the astonishment of a Frenchman redoubles. We vainly turn over the pages of his Dictionary, his eight volumes of essays, his many volumes of biographies, his numberless articles, his conversation so carefully collected; we yawn. His truths are too true; we already know his precepts by heart. We learn from him that life is short, and we ought to improve the few moments granted to us; that a mother ought not to bring up her son as a fop; that a man ought to repent of his faults, and yet avoid superstition; that in everything we ought to be active, and not hurried. We thank him for these sage counsels, but we mutter to ourselves that we could have done very well without them. We should like to know who could have been the lovers of *ennui* who have bought up thirteen thousand copies of his works. We then remember that sermons are liked in England, and that these essays are sermons. We discover that men of reflection do not need bold or striking ideas, but palpable and profitable truths. They desire to be furnished with a useful provision of authentic examples on man and his existence, and demand nothing more. No matter if the idea is vulgar; meat and bread are vulgar too, and are no less good. They wish to be taught the kinds and degrees of happiness and unhappiness, the varieties and results of character and condition, the advantages and inconveniences of town and country, knowledge and ignorance, wealth and moderate circumstances, because they are moralists and utilitarians; because they look in a book for the knowledge to turn them from folly, and motives to confirm them in uprightness; because they cultivate in themselves sense, that is common, practical reason. A little fiction, a few portraits, the least amount of amusement, will suffice to adorn it. This substantial food only needs a very simple seasoning. It is not the novelty of the dishes, nor dainty cookery, but solidity and wholesomeness, which they seek. For this reason essays are Johnson's national food. It is because they are insipid and dull for Frenchmen that they suit the taste of an English-

man. We understand now why they take for a favorite the respectable, the tiresome Dr. Samuel Johnson.

Here is, in part, Carlyle's view of Dante:

Perhaps one would say, *intensity*, with the much that depends on it, is the prevailing character of Dante's genius. Dante does not come before us as a large catholic mind; rather as a narrow and even sectarian mind: it is partly the fruit of his age and position, but partly too of his own nature. His greatness has, in all senses, concentrated itself into fiery emphasis and depth. He is world-great not because he is world-wide, but because he is world-deep. Through all objects he pierces as it were down into the heart of Being. I know nothing so intense as Dante.

Criticism may take the form of verse. An excellent example is Arnold's characterization of Byron, Goethe, and Wordsworth in "Memorial Verses," a tribute to the last of the three:

Goethe in Weimar sleeps; and Greece,
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.
But one such death remained to come:
The last poetic voice is dumb,—
We stand to-day by Wordsworth's tomb.

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
We bowed our head, and held our breath.
He taught us little, but our soul
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.
With shivering heart the strife we *saw*
Of passion with eternal law;
And yet with reverential awe
We watched the fount of fiery life
Which served for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said,—
 Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
 Physician of the iron age,
 Goethe has done his pilgrimage.
 He took the suffering human race,
 He read each wound, each weakness clear;
 And struck his finger on the place,
 And said, *Thou ailest here, and here!*
 He looked on Europe's dying hour
 Of fitful dream and feverish power;
 His eye plunged down the weltering strife,
 The turmoil of expiring life:
 He said, *The end is everywhere,*
Art still has truth, take refuge there!
 And he was happy, if to know
 Causes of things, and far below
 His feet to see the lurid flow
 Of terror, and insane distress,
 And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth! Ah, pale ghosts, rejoice!
 For never has such soothing voice
 Been to your shadowy world conveyed,
 Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
 Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
 Through Hades and the mournful gloom.
 Wordsworth has gone from us; and ye,
 Ah, may ye feel his voice as we!
 He too upon a wintry clime
 Had fallen,—on this iron time
 Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
 He found us when the age had bound
 Our souls in its benumbing round;
 He spoke, and loosed our soul in tears.
 He laid us as we lay at birth

On the cool flowery lap of earth:
Smiles broke from us, and we had ease;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sunlit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth returned; for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furled,
The freshness of the early world.

Ah! since dark days still bring to light
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
Others will teach us how to dare,
And against fear our breast to steel:
Others will strengthen us to bear—
But who, ah! who will make us feel?
The cloud of mortal destiny,
Others will front it fearlessly;
But who, like him, will put it by?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,
O Rotha, with thy living wave!
Sing him thy best! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

I quote from Harold Nicolson's brilliant study of Tennyson his view of the great laureate:

For although the great mass of Tennyson's poetry, however skilful it may be in form, appears in substance to be lacking in these important qualities of impulse, reality and emotion; although one must admit that his prosperous assurance, his

laborious and careful revisions, his accuracy and caution, lead one at times to doubt the compelling force of his inspiration, and even, perhaps, to question his sincerity; although he was apt on all occasions to exploit sentiments and situations which were superficial and perhaps unreal; although he flinched alike before the flame of passion and the cold nakedness of truth, yet there are sudden panting moments when the frightened soul of the man cries out to one like some wild animal caught in the fens at night-time—moments when he lies moaning in the half-light in an agony of fear. And at such moments the mystical genius of Tennyson comes upon one in a flash, and there can be no question of the reality of his emotion and his impulse.

I advance this theory not as a paradox but, for what it is worth, as an absolute personal conviction. For me, the essential Tennyson is a morbid and unhappy mystic. . . . He is a spirit for whom there was an "ever-moaning battle in the mist"—a soul whose fancies mingled

"with the sallow-rifted glooms
Of evening, and the moanings of the wind";

and thus at times there comes

"A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes
Or hath come, since the making of the world."

For those who accept this theory no great difficulty will arise in reconciling the essential Tennyson with the Tennyson of legend. One would prefer not to fall back upon the jargon of the psycho-analysts, but the application of the Freudian system to the case of Tennyson is quite illuminating. For Tennyson was afraid of a great many things: predominantly he was afraid of death, and sex, and God. And in all these matters he endeavoured instinctively to sublimate his terrors by enunci-

ating the beliefs which he desired to feel, by dwelling upon the solutions by which he would like to be convinced. The point does not require further elaboration: my contention is merely that once one accepts the realization of Tennyson, and particularly the younger Tennyson, as a man who was morbidly afraid, one must admit that the processes by which he conquered his afflictions cannot by any possibility be described as consciously insincere. And once one is able to dispose of this fatal suspicion of insincerity, the real beauty of Tennyson's poetry will triumph of itself.

The critic will do well not to rely wholly upon personal impressions or "the jargon of the psycho-analysts." The critic needs scholarship as well. An admirable example of critical insight based on sound scholarship is found in Professor Emile Legouis's *Geoffrey Chaucer*. With a thorough examination of Chaucer's reading as a background, Legouis suggests Chaucer's relation to the poetry of the French *trouvères* and to Anglo-Saxon poetry. The result is an illuminating characterization of Chaucer's poetry, although the distinctively English element in Chaucer's work is larger than Legouis here implies.

His mind was French, like his name. He was a direct descendant of the French *trouvères* and he had all that was theirs, save the language. . . . Absolutely nothing of the Anglo-Saxon literary past subsisted in his verse, although it was being revived around him, very little modified as to form and spirit. Now, there is something which appears very characteristic to one who has read the forcible and sombre, fervent and often turbid, effusions of the old English poetry before the Norman conquest, and that is that in passing from these to Chaucer,

we experience exactly the same sense of surprise at the absolute difference, the same impression of change in the air and sky, of a voice tuned to another key, which come to us when we leave these same productions to read the early French *trouvères*. And we find that precisely the same terms are needed to characterise alike the atmosphere of old French verse or of Chaucerian poetry.

How are we to define those characteristics which make him French in essentials? For those who are familiar with the *trouvères* (I allude to the best of these only, the others do not count), no such explanation is needed. But no reader gets so strong and clear an impression as the one who encounters them on coming out of that long darkness, seamed by lightning and strange glimmerings, which corresponds to Anglo-Saxon poetry. It is above all a sensation of daylight regained: it is an incipient clarity, but not that one, as has been too often implied, which is a purely abstract quality, made up of instinctive logic; or negative and due to an absence of subtle and rare symbolism. It is that, no doubt, and coupled with what it carries with it, the gift of story-telling and the instinct for clear, abundant, and well-ordained detail. But it is infinitely more. It is a light as real as that of dawn, flooding all things and gladdening men's eyes. The word "clair," one of those gems of the French language, which expresses this sensation, is, if one looks into it, the favourite expression of the old French poets, constantly met with in the *Chanson de Roland*, to which it gives its lucid atmosphere. . . . As in the case of the French *trouvères*, there runs through his work a joyousness born of the pleasure of living, and which shows itself in a partiality to sunny scenes, a constant reminiscence of spring time, may-bushes, flowers, birds, and music. There is a line in which he sums up the description of the Squire's youthfulness, and which might be used to define his whole poetry (what else is the brilliant essay by the American writer Lowell but a commentary on this line?)—

He was as fresh as the month of May.

Now, though this line may never be found in Chaucer's predecessors, it is quite French: it is, as it were, the essence of early French poetry: it falls back into a French decasyllable as into its natural mould—

Il était frais comme le mois de mai.

Finally, here is Shelley's characterization of the later Coleridge. Arthur Symons says of this passage: "Those seven lines are not merely good criticism: they are final; they leave nothing more to be said. Criticism, at such a height, is no longer mere reasoning; it has the absolute sanction of intuition."

You will see Coleridge; he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre and the pure
Intense irradiation of a mind
Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
Flags wearily through darkness and despair—
A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
A hooded eagle among blinking owls.

XII. ON READING NEW BOOKS

The tastes and ideas of one generation are not those of the next. This next generation arrives;—first its sharpshooters, its quick-witted, audacious light troops; then the elephantine main body. The imposing array of its predecessor it confidently assails, riddles it with bullets, passes over its body. It goes hard then with many once popular reputations, with authorities once oracular.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

The tides of taste flow and ebb and flow again, and works of “genius” and “art” pop in and out of fashion like little men on old-time clocks. A watcher, even in one brief generation, acquires a wholesome cynicism, eyes dog-wise the criticism of the day, the cults of the clever, the enthusiasms of the young. He learns that experiment and achievement are not quite interchangeable terms.

JOHN GALSWORTHY.

“Criticism of one’s contemporaries is nothing but conversation,” said a brilliant French critic; and the literary historian is almost certain to agree with him. Posterity usually cares nothing for contemporary verdicts. Unfortunately, however, a great deal of criticism is nothing but conversation—no matter to whom it is applied. Furthermore, what we call contemporary literature was written not for posterity but for *us*, and it ought to mean more to us than to any later generation. Even if we cannot anticipate the ultimate rating of

Eugene O'Neill, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Theodore Dreiser, it is important that we bring to bear upon their books the best critical apparatus we have. We cannot wait till they—and perhaps we—are dead.

Hazlitt finally reached the point of saying, "I hate to read new books." He had lost much of his earlier sympathy with the new, as the following passage from "On Reading Old Books" shows:

Books have in a great measure lost their power over me; nor can I revive the same interest in them as formerly. I perceive when a thing is good, rather than feel it . . . the reading of Mr. Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes* lately made me regret that I was not young again. The beautiful and tender images there conjured up, "come like shadows—so depart." The "tiger-moth's wings," which he has spread over his rich poetic blazonry, just flit across my fancy; the gorgeous twilight window which he has painted over again in his verse, to me "blushes" almost in vain "with blood of queens and kings." I know how I should have felt at one time in reading such passages; and that is all. The sharp luscious flavour, the fine *aroma* is fled, and nothing but the stalk, the bran, the husk of literature is left.

In reading the books of our contemporaries, however, the great majority of us are far more likely to overrate than underestimate them. There are several circumstances which make it easy for us to do this.

In the first place, we are likely to overrate the work of a living author merely because it is so much easier to read than the work of an author who wrote in a style now obsolete upon subjects that lack timeliness.

The intelligent reader of a poem by Sandburg or Masfield may perhaps get as much, say, as seventy-five per cent of what the poet tried to convey, but the reader of Shakespeare or Milton is probably fortunate if he gets as much as twenty-five per cent. Is it any wonder, then, that the average reader of today feels that Masfield is a better poet than Milton and that Arnold Bennett is a better novelist than Scott or Thackeray? We miss the full meaning of Milton's words, we miss his allusions, we miss his feeling about life and art. Without study, we find it hard to recognize in him a man fundamentally like ourselves. A play by Barrie offers few difficulties, but a Shakesperean tragedy presents many, for, to begin with, we do not know Shakespeare's theater, his audience, his background, his point of view, or even his language.

FASHION

In estimating the value of a recent book, it is difficult to avoid the influence of fashion. Two things are involved in fashion: a craving for novelty and a desire to follow the crowd. Ask a young woman whether last year's styles in hats are as beautiful as those of this season, and she will probably tell you emphatically No. Show her the hats which her grandmother wore as a girl, and she will find them ridiculous. Yet an artist, indifferent to styles, might think the old far superior to the new. Nearly every year brings in some

artistic monstrosity which the indiscriminating prefer to the old merely because they want something new. Not until the style has changed do the many perceive the essential ugliness which an artist would have seen at first. So far as fashions are concerned—in books or in dress—there is little, if any, real advance. The taste of the crowd changes rapidly, but it improves very slowly.

The books which were popular in grandmother's day seem almost as ridiculous as the hats and dresses in the family album. Did you ever read a novel by E. P. Roe? He was the Harold Bell Wright of your grandmother's time, and probably neither better nor worse as a novelist. What has become of the best sellers of ten, twenty, fifty years ago? Intrinsically, they are no worse for the passing of time, but the readers who gave them their vogue generally find them unreadable now. The taste of the many changes with little perceptible advance. If you will take the trouble to glance through a file of *The Bookman* for 1910 or 1920, you will be startled to note that many books which you never heard of were best sellers then. Then, as now, reviewers were in the habit of praising the books of the hour in language which should be reserved for the few books that belong to all time.

One is sometimes tempted to make Lamb's resolve—when a new book comes out, to read an old one. But Lamb's method merely dodges the fundamental prob-

lem that we are trying to face. Besides, Lamb read the work of his best contemporaries with singular keenness of perception and appreciation. We must not be prejudiced against the new merely because it is new, for every classic was once new—and sometimes quite popular. Shakespeare's contemporaries flocked to see *Hamlet* and thousands read Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*—even though few spectators or readers recognized the play or the novel as a masterpiece. It is a misfortune to miss a new book that has an excellent chance of becoming a classic. For example, there are two fairly recent books dealing with the World War that seem to me to have more than ephemeral importance: Thomas E. Lawrence's *Revolt in the Desert* and Hervey Allen's *Toward the Flame*. Each of these accounts of the writer's personal experience should mean more to a generation which has lived through the great War than it can mean to any other.

In literature, as in every other form of human activity, there is a large element of convention. As time passes, old conventions give place to new. To appreciate older literature, one must regard sympathetically older conventions of subject matter and of form. A few years ago some wag submitted as his own a poem of Shelley's in a South African poetry contest. The poem was not recognized as Shelley's, but it failed to win a prize; it was too old-fashioned. Under similar conditions, would any living editor of a fiction maga-

zine accept *The Vicar of Wakefield* or *Ivanhoe* or *Henry Esmond*? Probably not.

JOURNALISM AND THE MOTION PICTURE

Modern journalism and the motion picture industry have injured—if not vitiated—the taste of the present generation of young readers so that it has become increasingly difficult for them to read the older masterpieces with pleasure. A story as presented in the moving picture theater offers fewer difficulties than a novel or a regular drama. One hardly needs to know how to read. The moving picture contains little that provokes thought, and it is usually limited to the external side of life. Consequently, as every teacher knows, the schools are full of young people whose command of the English language is too poor to permit them to read with pleasure books like *The Sketch Book* or *David Copperfield*.

The influence of journalism has been somewhat similar. Journalism, on the whole, has, I think, been a force for good; but it has certain evil influences which need to be pointed out here. Modern journalism is a highly systematized and commercialized method of exploiting the timely. It deals with what interests us for only a day—or, in magazines and books, for a month or a year at most. It tends towards exaggeration, inaccuracy, sensationalism; it lacks a sense of proportion. To one brought up on the tabloid newspapers,

the great classics seem tame. Only when John Erskine or some one else "jazzes" them up, do we read them. The modern newspaper is often nearly filled, not with news, but with cheap magazine features. Our magazines, too, go in for the timely, even in their fiction. Even the novelists are drawn into the stream. Fannie Hurst's *A President is Born* was quite timely in 1928, the year of a presidential election; in 1930 it will probably interest no one.

Journalism affects the critic as well as the reader. Both live more in the present than their predecessors did. Book reviewing, now conducted on a large scale in our newspapers and magazines, is a branch of journalism. It is an attempt to exploit the news value of books. The reviewer wants to write something interesting, and he resorts to various journalistic devices in order to get a hearing. He persuades his reader that the latest novel is comparable to the work of Tolstoy or Meredith—which probably he has not read. And we, the readers of books, are like Huckleberry Finn; we "don't take no stock in dead people," or in dead men's books. Much of our present-day reviewing in the magazines is quite brilliantly done in many ways—which is yet another reason for being on one's guard against it.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Another factor that tends to make the older masterpieces seem difficult and remote is the industrialization

of American life. While our ancestors and the makers of our older literature lived in the country or small towns, we live in cities or in towns of a different kind. No longer do many of us live in intimate contact with nature; hence Wordsworth speaks a language foreign to us. Animals are for us something to be seen in a zoo or in the movies. To us trees are simply trees. The man who has not spent some time in the woods and fields is handicapped for the appreciation of such older works as *As You Like It*, *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, and *Snow-bound*. The poet of the future will have to make the confession which Santayana makes in the preface to his excellent poems: "I am city-bred, and that companionship with nature, those rural notes, which for English poets are almost inseparable from poetic feeling, fail me altogether. Landscape to me is only a background for fable or a symbol for fate, as it was to the ancients; and the human scene itself is but a scheme for reflection." We are all in danger of becoming cockneys, says the editor of *The Saturday Review of Literature*:

The new man of the industrial age has a name waiting for him. He will be a cockney. . . . Literature of the older kind will be impossible to the cockney. He cannot make it, and will not understand it. The rich beauty of Warwickshire which suffuses the poetry of Shakespeare comes from a world lost to him. He cannot imagine Milton's Eden, and he is empty of those memories of rural beauty without which Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats (absurdly called cockney), Browning, Tennyson,

are inconceivable. . . . He can communicate with nature only through a machine. Hence, being man and having carried his creative mind and need for beauty into the streets, he will make a new literature for himself, of which fragments are already appearing, nervous, intelligent, dynamic, racked often by feverish rhythms, shaken into rapid scenes, sharp paragraphs, quick impressions, always a moving picture even when most philosophical. . . . Art, religion, literature will be quickly assembled, often tinkered with, quickly scrapped.

CHANGES IN THE CURRICULUM

The industrialization of our life has had far-reaching effects. One of those which concerns literature needs to be pointed out here. The changes which have come about in the educational curriculum, as a result of the industrial revolution, make the older writers seem more remote, even to the college-bred. When the ancient classics were the basis of every gentleman's education, the author could assume that there was a large body of knowledge common to himself and his readers. He assumed as a matter of course that they knew something about the chief ancient authors, Homer, Vergil, and Horace; about Greek mythology; Greek and Roman history; and the Bible. To this common stock of information authors went for subjects, suggestions, allusions. But we—when we attempt to read Milton, for example—are at a great disadvantage in comparison with our ancestors. Our vocational training fits us better for living, no doubt, but it leaves us

handicapped when we read the English classics. We do not recognize allusions to even the most famous stories or characters in the *Iliad*, the *Æneid*, and the Bible. Is it any wonder that we sometimes find Shakespeare and Milton dull? Inevitably, then, the student of English literature must familiarize himself with the intellectual background of older writers.

DEMOCRACY

In what I am going to say under this sub-head do not imagine that I have anything to say against democracy in politics—where we need more and not less than we have. But the reputation of the classics is made not by the many but by “the passionate few.” In “The Cheer-leader in Literature” William McFee says:

It is possible these cheer-leaders of mediocrity are sincere, but they have no right to the positions they hold if literature is one of the fine arts. I suspect that in the back of their minds they have a confused notion that, if three or four million people buy the books of a certain author, we are to concede him or her a prominent position in literature. At the risk of being regarded as conceited and highbrow, I assert that we have no right to do anything of the kind. Literature is not a democracy where numbers rule. It is an aristocracy where brains and originality are paramount. . . . Democracy is very fine, no doubt, but its principles are fundamentally opposed to the principles of literature. . . . The doctrine that those who have the money and the numbers should dictate the nature of religion and science, has already become established in the Republic. What more probable than that the quality of a work of art should be referred to the same omniscient tribunal?

For all these reasons, one is likely to overrate the contemporary in comparison with the classics. One who wishes to improve his taste will do well not to read too many recent books. As Arnold Bennett says: "If you differ with a classic, it is you who are wrong, and not the book. If you differ with a modern work, you may be wrong or you may be right, but no judge is authoritative enough to decide. Your taste is unformed. It needs guidance, and it needs authoritative guidance." This is putting it rather bluntly, but the advice Bennett gives is undeniably worth following. There is a good deal also to be said for the position which Hazlitt took in his essay, "On Reading New Books:"

I cannot understand the rage manifested by the greater part of the world for reading New Books. If the public had read all those that have gone before, I can conceive how they should not wish to read the same work twice over; but when I consider the countless volumes that lie unopened, unregarded, unread, and unthought-of, I cannot enter into the pathetic complaints that I hear made, that Sir Walter writes no more—that the press is idle—that Lord Byron is dead. If I have not read a book before, it is, to all intents and purposes, new to me, whether it was printed yesterday or three hundred years ago. If it be urged that it has no modern, passing incidents, and is out of date and old-fashioned, then it is so much the newer; it is farther removed from other works that I have lately read, from the familiar routine of ordinary life, and makes so much more addition to my knowledge. But many people would as soon think of putting on old armour, as of taking up a book not published within the last month, or year

at the utmost. There is a fashion in reading as well as in dress, which lasts only for the season. One would imagine that books were, like women, the worse for being old; that they have a pleasure in being read for the first time; that they open their leaves more cordially; that the spirit of enjoyment wears out with the spirit of novelty; and that, after a certain age, it is high time to put them on the shelf. This conceit seems to be followed up in practice. What is it to me that another—that hundreds or thousands have in all ages read a work? Is it on this account the less likely to give me pleasure, because it has delighted so many others? Or can I taste this pleasure by proxy? Or am I in any degree the wiser for their knowledge?

THE VICTORIANS AND OURSELVES

The books which are most difficult for us to judge are those which have gone out of fashion in recent years. It takes more courage to admit a liking for Dickens, Tennyson, Irving, and Longfellow than it takes to confess to a fondness for any earlier writers. The part which fashion plays in literary taste has been admirably explained in an essay on "Critical Certainities" by E. E. Kellett:

The greatest difficulty in the way of confident and sound criticism is the constant shifting in the standards of taste. Every critic, however cautious or independent, is necessarily the child of his age and of his nationality, and has no guarantee that before long some revolution in men's attitude may not put all his views out of date and render all his judgments nugatory. As modes alter in the realm of dress, nay, even in physical beauty, so the fashion alters in the realm of literature, and that which was once admired is cast aside in favour of something new, or, not infrequently, in favour of that which was once despised. . . .

A Cowley takes the world by storm: a generation passes, and Pope asks, "Who now reads Cowley?" Pope himself becomes the *ne plus ultra* of genius, and the *Essay on Man* is the height of the sublime. Half a century after his death it is seriously debated whether he is a poet at all. Byron's *Cain*, said Scott in 1821, "certainly matches Milton on his own ground"; in 1860 people did not stop to consider such a judgment; they smiled at it and passed on. Edgar Allan Poe expressed the deliberate opinion that Tennyson was the greatest poet that ever lived: where is Tennyson now? But this is far from all. There has been, in almost every case, a reaction against the reaction; Pope and Byron are already more or less restored to favour, and there is every sign that the restoration of Tennyson will not be long delayed. Nor may the restoration, in its turn, be final; if we may judge the future by the past, there will yet be many ebbs and flows of opinion.

"The generation least likely to be right," adds Mr. Kellett, "is the one just following the author." It is good for us who smile at the absurdities of the Victorians to remember that we, too, shall one day belong to the past. Our contemporary literary idols will some day be as much out of fashion as Tennyson and Longfellow are now. A still younger generation will make fun of our tastes, our beliefs, our fashions, our favorite writers. In *The Saturday Review of Literature* for December 5, 1925, appeared a very interesting essay on "Time, Tides, and Taste," in which the veteran English novelist and dramatist, John Galsworthy, pointed out "the general certainty of extinction" that awaits most contemporary authors:

The present period, very sparkling, unquestionably self-conscious and inclined to proclaim its monopoly of cleverness, will contribute, but not by virtue of its opinion of itself, nor by reason of its extravagant experiments. The 'Forties will not write—nay, nor even the 'Thirties—in the style of Mr. Dotter and Mrs. Dasher of the 'Twenties; the 'Thirties will put in stops again, with other old-fashioned aids to the brain, such as coherence and an obvious connection between words and thought. . . . No! To-day will count because, like most periods, it has some genuine creative talent, some real power of telling a tale, and some quiet devotion to its job. It will count in spite of that proclaimed cleverness which is perhaps only speed. The ball flies more lightly—the “wickets are faster,” as we say; hit or get out is the watchword. But the result? Will Time give the palm to the team of to-day over the team of ten, twenty, thirty years ago? Maybe—for there never were so many players of the writing game as now.

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

I have no great sympathy with those few who never read anything new or with those who maintain that it is always impossible to estimate even approximately the value of a contemporary book. “It is absurd,” says Robert Frost, “to think that the only way to tell if a poem is lasting is to wait and see if it lasts. The right reader of a good poem can tell the moment it strikes him that he has taken an immortal wound—that he will never get over it. That is to say, permanence in poetry as in love is perceived instantly. It hasn’t to await the test of time. The proof of a poem is not that

we have never forgotten it, but that we knew at sight we never could forget it."

This is only partly true, I think, and true only when we have "the right reader," who belongs to Arnold Bennett's "passionate few." To judge the contemporary fairly, one needs not only a catholic taste but a sense of proportion, which can be acquired only through a study of the masterpieces of the past. It is significant that of the numerous studies of contemporary poetry the most illuminating, *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*, was written by a Harvard professor of English, John Livingston Lowes, who brought to bear upon the poetry of our time a mind intimately acquainted with Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Coleridge, and Keats. While the reviewers were either praising the new poetry to the skies because they knew no other or else damning the new because it was unlike what they had read in school, Professor Lowes pointed out that poetic revolt, far from being a new thing in literary history, is a recurrent phenomenon. He made it plain that the new poets had a real case, but he warned against praising the living poets in terms appropriate only to the supremely great.

A COMPARATIVE METHOD

A good rule to follow is, when you have read a recent book, to read an older book of a similar kind or upon a similar theme. When you have read a new novel,

compare it with one of the old. It is impossible to place Willa Cather or Sherwood Anderson unless you know some of the great novelists of the nineteenth century—Tolstoy, Balzac, Thackeray, Jane Austen. You cannot adequately appreciate the plays of Eugene O'Neill or Bernard Shaw without knowing those of Shakespeare and Molière, nor the short stories of Katherine Mansfield without knowing Poe, Hawthorne, and de Maupassant. In writers who are conscious of the older masters, it is particularly important that you know the older writers. Masfield's sonnets are written in the same form as Shakespeare's, and the character portraits in his *Reynard the Fox* are modeled on those in Chaucer's Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*. If we draw our standards from recent books alone, our judgments will be haphazard; but if we model our taste upon the undisputed classics, we shall judge more sanely and accurately.

Not only will the comparative method prevent our overrating the contemporary; it will also throw new light upon the classics. Says H. G. Wells in *The Outline of History*:

If the Greek classics are to be read with any benefit by modern men, they must be read as the work of men like ourselves. Regard must be had to their traditions, their opportunities, and their limitations. There is a disposition to exaggeration in all human admiration; most of our classical texts are very much mangled, and all were originally the work of human beings in difficulties, living in a time of such darkness and narrowness

of outlook as makes our own age by comparison a period of dazzling illumination. What we shall lose in reverence by this familiar treatment, we shall gain in sympathy for that group of troubled, uncertain, and very modern minds. The Athenian writers were, indeed, the first of modern men. They were discussing questions that we still discuss; they began to struggle with the great problems that confront us to-day. Their writings are our dawn. They began an inquiry, and they arrived at no solutions. We cannot pretend to-day that we have arrived at solutions to most of the questions they asked.

But in reading the classics in the spirit which Wells suggests, we must beware of what Norman Foerster calls "the provincialism of time." We must not patronize the great of other periods; in many ways other periods have been better than our own. All this is admirably brought out in the opening chapter of George Lyman Kittredge's *Chaucer and his Poetry*:

There is no great harm in the air of patronage with which our times, in their self-satisfied enlightenment, address the great who were of old; but we do use droll adjectives! If these great ancients show the simplicity of perfect art, we call them *naïf*, particularly when their irony eludes us; if they tickle our fancy, they are *quaint*; if we find them altogether satisfactory, both in form and substance, we adorn them with the epithet *modern*, which we somehow think is a superlative of eminence. *Naïf*, *quaint*, *modern*,—a singular vocabulary! Add *convincing*, and the critic has done his best, or his worst.

For it is we that are naïf; quaintness is incompatible with art; and as for modernity, what we mistake for that, is the everlasting truth, the enduring quality that consists in conformity to changeless human nature. "The ancients," said a wise man, "never understood that they were ancients."

Chaucer lived in the middle ages, in the last sixty years, or thereabout, of the fourteenth century; but he is the most modern of English poets, and one of the most popular. This is not a paradox; it is the sober, unrhetorical statement of a truism. For he knew mankind and loved it, and his specialty was mankind as it was, and is. Besides, his age was vastly like our own, in everything but costume and "the outward habit of encounter." The fourteenth century seems less remote than the eighteenth; Geoffrey Chaucer is nearer to us than Alexander Pope.

It was an age of intense activity,—a singularly "modern" time. One is tempted to assert that all the problems which vex the world to-day, either sprang into existence or made themselves especially troublesome in the sixty years of Chaucer's life. For there is scarcely a political or social catchword of the present (even "feminism," as I hope to show in due season) which does not fit the fourteenth century.

THE RELATIVITY OF LITERATURE AND OF TASTE

In literature, perhaps nothing is absolutely final. Every writer, every critic, every reader has a different conception of literature. Literature changes from generation to generation; and so does criticism, both changing in response to economic, social, and other influences which affect literature as well as life. In his *Literature in a Changing Age*, an illuminating study of the Victorian period, Professor A. H. Thorndike says:

As civilization advances, literature continues and grows. It is always dependent on the past, on the store saved by memory or later preserved in writing, but it is dependent too on the

new creation, on the addition of new matter, the expression of new eras and personalities.

At any given moment, literature consists of the products of the past; but its chance for a continued existence rests on the activity of the present. If it is determined in part by heredity, it receives new direction from an evershifting environment. If its nature seems the same through the ages, its nurture is sure to vary.

Its bounds, its ideals, its purposes are never secure. . . . Definition may state what it was, or is; tomorrow it will be something else. . . .

Our study, therefore, is concerned not only with the continuing tradition but with the departure from it, not only with the books that go on repeating their messages but also with the new books that reflect novel ideas or shifting sympathies. . . . Even in a period when tradition is dominant and when creative effort is governed largely by ideals of conformity, there is still inevitable change or readjustment.

We live in a changing world, where values are chiefly relative. Beware of dogmatism. No one has a taste that is absolutely catholic, and no great writer is free from imperfections. If Homer nods occasionally, so do the critics—Coleridge, Arnold, Poe, and Lowell all had limitations. If you cannot settle what Anatole France called "the disputes of the flute-players," the critics of art, you can at least learn to be tolerant; and you can increase indefinitely your capacity for reading the masterpieces with pleasure and profit to yourself. Do not allow yourself to become a partisan of any one type of literature, prose or poetry, new or old. Try to appreciate the best of all kinds.

While you are young, do not overrate the new; and when you grow older, do not lose your capacity for enjoying the contemporary.

THE PERMANENCE OF LITERATURE

If there is much in literature which is incessantly changing, there is also something which changes little or not at all. Professor Thorndike has noted this side of literature also:

Even among the fluctuating appearances of literature, there is indeed much which remains stable. The poems of Homer, though men no longer speak their language or regard their deities, are as real and as significant as ever. Many of the forms of prose and verse continue with little change from century to century. Lyrics of love and worship are not greatly different today from those of ancient Egypt. The stories of battle and ambition renew their life in the emotions of generation after generation. These poems and stories seem to dissolve time and space and speak of an unchanging humanity. The traditions of literature survive like great monuments on which the wear of time crumbles an edge or obscures an ornament but leaves unimpaired the essential record of human greatness. Only some bewildered anarchist dares to suggest that Homer or Dante or Shakespeare was not a great poet.

“A sense of history as the common adventure of all mankind is as necessary for ‘peace within’ as it is for peace between the nations,” says H. G. Wells in the introduction to *The Outline of History*. Wells in a later passage notes the importance of writing as a means of building up a great tradition:

With the invention of writing, which developed out of pictorial record, human tradition was able to become fuller and much more exact. Verbal tradition, which had hitherto changed from age to age, began to be fixed. Men separated by hundreds of miles could now communicate their thoughts. An increasing number of human beings began to share a common written knowledge and a common sense of a past and a future. . . .

From the first writings onward a new sort of tradition, an enduring and immortal tradition, began in the minds of men. Life, through mankind, grew thereafter more and more distinctly conscious of itself and its world. It is a thin streak of intellectual growth we trace in history, at first in a world of tumultuous ignorance and forgetfulness; it is like a mere line of light coming through the chink of an opening door into a darkened room; but slowly it widens, it grows. At last came a time in the history of Europe when the door, at the push of the printer, began to open more rapidly. Knowledge flared up, and as it flared it ceased to be the privilege of a favoured minority. For us now that door swings wider, and the light behind grows brighter. Misty it is still, glowing through clouds of dust and reek.

The door is not half open; the light is but a light new lit. Our world to-day is only in the beginning of knowledge.

The tradition of which Wells is speaking includes of course literature and criticism. The conclusion of John Masefield's preface to his *Collected Poems* suggests how much the tradition of English literature may mean to the creative writer:

And though, before this war, when I was writing, I saw little enough of that land [the unseen world of beauty], life is kind and wise and generous, and perhaps, in that new time, I may see more, and be able to tell more, and know in fuller

measure what the poets of my race have known, about that world and those people existing forever over in England, the images of what England and the English may become, or spiritually are. Chaucer and Shakespeare, some lines of Gray, of Keats, of Wordsworth and of William Morris, the depth, force, beauty and tenderness of the English mind, are inspiration enough, and school enough and star enough to urge and guide in any night of the soul, however wayless from our blindness or black from our passions and our follies.

So much for the permanence of great literature. Can one say as much for criticism? I think we can. We are living in a period of great critical activity. As Dr. Canby says, "Only a prophet dares say that we are at the beginning of a great creative period in the United States, but any open-eyed observer can see that an era of American literary criticism is well under way." I shall bring my book to a close with a few sentences from the concluding chapter of Professor George Saintsbury's three-volume *History of Criticism*:

[The critical faculty] can certainly be cultivated where it exists, and it probably in all cases requires cultivation in order that it may be perfect. In any fair state of development it is its own exceeding great reward,—a possession of the most precious that man can have. And the practical value of the Art of Criticism, and of the history of Criticism (which, as in other cases, is merely the exposition of the art in practice), is that it can and does assist this development; that by pointing out past errors it prevents interference with enjoyment; that it shows how to grasp and how to enjoy; that it helps the ear to listen when the horns of Elfland blow.

NOTES

CHAPTER I. WHY WE READ

A fuller statement of the various views of literature will be found in Chapter IX. Excellent suggestions on how and what to read are found in John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*, Arnold Bennett's *Literary Taste: How to Form It*, Max Eastman's *Enjoyment of Poetry*, and C. Alphonso Smith's *What Can Literature Do for Me?* The student who wishes to learn to write should consult George Herbert Palmer's "Self-cultivation in English" and Rollo Walter Brown's collection of essays, *The Writer's Art by Those Who Have Practiced It* or one of the various manuals prepared for college use. Under the title of *Learning to Write*, Charles Scribner's Sons have gathered into one volume Stevenson's various observations on the art of writing.

CHAPTER II. IMPROVING ONE'S TASTE

See the lecture, "Of King's Treasuries," in Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*, and Arnold Bennett's *Literary Taste*.

CHAPTER III. MEN AND WOMEN, REAL AND IMAGINARY

On biography, see Wilbur L. Cross's brief *Outline of Biography*, William Roscoe Thayer's *The Art of Biography*, Waldo H. Dunn's *English Biography*, Harold Nicolson's *The Development of English Biography*, and Anna Robeson Burr's *The Autobiography*. Interesting brief discussions will be found

in Chauncey Tinker's "Assault upon the Poets," in *The Yale Review* for July, 1925; James Truslow Adams's "Biography as an Art," in *The Saturday Review of Literature* for November 12, 1927; and in Gamaliel Bradford's "The Art of Biography," in *The Saturday Review of Literature* for May 23, 1925, the preface to his volume, *Wives*, and the essay on "Psychography" in his *Lee the American*.

Some interesting recent biographies not mentioned in the text are Gerald Johnson's life of Andrew Jackson, Thomas Beer's life of Stephen Crane, Denis Saurat's *Milton: Man and Thinker*, Phillips Russell's *Benjamin Franklin: The First Civilized American*, Lord Charnwood's life of Abraham Lincoln, Albert J. Beveridge's *Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858*, Burton J. Hendrick's *The Life and Letters of Walter Hines Page*, André Maurois's *Disraeli*, Paul de Kruif's *The Microbe Hunters*, W. E. Woodward's *George Washington: The Man and the Image*, Rupert Hughes's two-volume life of Washington, Lloyd Morris's *The Rebellious Puritan: Portrait of Mr. Hawthorne*, R. F. Dibble's *Strenuous Americans*, Walter Noble Burns's *The Saga of Billy the Kid*, Hervey Allen's *Israfel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe*, Van Wyck Brooks's *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* and *The Pilgrimage of Henry James*, and Emory Holloway's *Walt Whitman: An Interpretation in Narrative*. For excellent brief biographies of Englishmen, see *The Dictionary of National Biography*. The first volume of *The Dictionary of American Biography* has recently been published.

Some interesting autobiographies not mentioned in the text are Gamaliel Bradford's *Life and I*, Henry Adams's *The Education of Henry Adams*, Edward Bok's *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, M. E. Ravage's *An American in the Making*, and Brander Matthews' *These Many Years*. Three interesting accounts of war-time experiences are Tolstoy's *Sevastopol*,

Hervey Allen's *Toward the Flame*, and Thomas E. Lawrence's *Revolt in the Desert*. Under the title of *Lincoln's Autobiography*, Nathaniel W. Stephenson has collected Lincoln's various accounts of his thoughts and experiences.

Specimen Letters, edited by Albert S. Cook and Allen R. Benham, is an excellent brief collection. E. V. Lucas's two-volume collection of the letters of Charles Lamb is a book that every lover of letters should read.

On the reading of history, see *A Guide to the Reading and Study of American History*, by A. B. Hart, Edward Channing, and F. J. Turner, A. M. Schlesinger's *New Viewpoints in American History*, Edwin R. A. Seligman's *The Economic Interpretation of History* (compare this with Brander Matthews' "The Economic Interpretation of Literary History" in his *Gateways to Literature*), Langlois and Seignobos's *Introduction to the Study of History* (the original is in French), John Spencer Bassett's *The Middle Group of American Historians*, F. J. Turner's *The Frontier in American History*, Hendrik van Loon's chapter on "History" in *Civilization in the United States*, George Macaulay Trevelyan's "History and Literature," in *The Yale Review* for October, 1924, and Clarence Walworth Alvord's "Changing Fashions in History," in *The American Mercury* for September, 1926. Students interested in American literary history will find interesting essays by various hands in *The Reinterpretation of American Literature*, edited by Norman Foerster.

Some interesting recent histories are Charles and Mary Beard's *The Rise of American Civilization*; James Truslow Adams's *The Founding of New England, Revolutionary New England*, and *New England in the Republic*; Claude G. Bowers' *Jefferson and Hamilton*; William E. Dodd's *The Cotton Kingdom*; Allan Nevins's *The Emergence of Modern America*; and H. G. Wells's *The Outline of History*.

In Chapter III of *What Can Literature Do for Me?* C. Alphonso Smith gives a list of fifteen great characters in fiction, with interesting comments. On character in fiction, see the chapters on characters in Bliss Perry's *A Study of Prose Fiction*, Clayton Hamilton's *Manual of the Art of Fiction*, and George P. Baker's *Dramatic Technique*.

CHAPTER IV. STORY

For the novel, see Bliss Perry's *A Study of Prose Fiction*, Edwin Muir's *The Structure of the Novel*, Grant Overton's *The Philosophy of Fiction*, E. M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*, and Clayton Hamilton's *A Manual of the Art of Fiction*. Percy Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction* is a brilliant study of the point of view in fiction. For the history of fiction, see Wilbur L. Cross's *The Development of the English Novel*, J. B. Priestly's *The English Novel*, Richard Burton's *Masters of the English Novel*, Carl Van Doren's *The American Novel and Contemporary American Novelists*, and Annie Russell Marble's *A Study of the Modern Novel*. Better than any of the manuals are certain essays by writers of fiction. A number of the following are contained in Rollo Walter Brown's *The Writer's Art by Those Who Have Practiced It*: Henry James's "The Art of Fiction"; Robert Louis Stevenson's "A Gossip on Romance," "A Humble Romance," and "The Genesis of *The Master of Ballantrae*"; Joseph Conrad's Epilogue to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*; Guy de Maupassant's preface to *Pierre et Jean*; Thackeray's "De Finibus" and "On a Lazy, Idle Boy" (both in his *Roundabout Papers*); William Dean Howells's *Criticism and Fiction*; Frank Norris's *The Responsibilities of the Novelist*; Chapter XVII of George Eliot's *Adam Bede*; F. Marion Crawford's *The Novel: What It Is*; and "The English Novel," in Gilbert Cannan's *Samuel Butler: A Critical Study*. O Henry has two interesting

stories that deal indirectly with the art of fiction: "Best-seller" and "A Municipal Report."

For the short story, see Poe's review of Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales*, Brander Matthews' "The Philosophy of the Short-story," Fred Lewis Pattee's *The Development of the American Short Story* and *Century Readings in the American Short Story*, Frances Newman's *The Short Story's Mutations*, Henry Goodman's *Creating the Short Story*, James Finch Royster's *American Short Stories*, Robert L. Ramsay's *Short Stories of America*, and Benjamin Heydrick's *Americans All*. The last two contain interesting examples of American settings.

On the study of the drama, see William Archer's *Playmaking*; Percival Wilde's *The Craftsmanship of the One-act Play*; George P. Baker's *Dramatic Technique*; Brander Matthews' *A Study of the Drama*, *Shakspeare as a Playwright*, etc.; Clayton Hamilton's *The Theory of the Theater*; Barrett H. Clark's *European Theories of the Drama* and *A Study of the Modern Drama*. There are many interesting collections of plays, of which I mention Brander Matthews' *Chief European Dramatists*; Thomas H. Dickinson's *Chief Contemporary Dramatists*, first and second series; Raymond W. Pence's *Dramas by Present-day Writers*; and *An Introduction to Drama* by Jay B. Hubbell and John O. Beaty. There are interesting discussions of dialogue in drama in Baker's *Dramatic Technique* and Wilde's *The Craftsmanship of the One-act Play*.

For the use of setting in fiction, see the manuals by Bliss Perry and Clayton Hamilton.

CHAPTER V. LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

Besides Will Durant's *The Story of Philosophy* and William DeWitt Hyde's *The Five Great Philosophies of Life*, I suggest the following as very readable: Woodbridge Riley's *American*

Thought, Vernon L. Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought*, Schopenhauer's *Essays*, Matthew Arnold's "Pagan and Christian Religious Sentiment," William James's *Letters* and his *Selected Papers on Philosophy* in the Everyman's Library edition, George Santayana's *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion, Character and Opinion in the United States*, and *Little Essays*. The student will find Plato very readable in Jowett's translation.

CHAPTER VI. WORDS

The etymologies in Archbishop Trench's *The Study of Words* are in some cases wrong, but there is no more interesting book on the subject. Some more recent books are Greenough and Kittredge's *Words and their Ways in English Speech*, George H. McKnight's *English Words and their Background*, and Logan Pearsall Smith's *Words and Idioms*. Other useful books are Fowler's *Dictionary of Modern English Usage* and *The Century Vocabulary Builder*, by Garland Greever and J. M. Batchelor. Every student should become acquainted with *The New English Dictionary* as well as with Webster's and the Standard unabridged dictionaries. For discussions of the use of words in poetry and imaginative prose, see Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Bliss Perry's *A Study of Poetry*, and John Livingston Lowes's *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*.

There are interesting essays on style by Buffon, Walter Pater, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, Sir Walter Raleigh, Arnold Bennett, and others. J. Middleton Murry has treated the whole matter in a suggestive book, *The Problem of Style*. Many of the best essays on style will be found in Fulcher's *Foundations of English Style* and Lane Cooper's *Representative Essays on the Theory of Style*. See also Matthew Arnold's two essays, "On Translating Homer" and "The Study of Poetry."

CHAPTER VII. VERSE

For fuller treatment of versification, see Louis Untermeyer's *The Forms of Poetry*, Bright and Miller's *English Versification*, C. E. Andrews' *The Writing and the Reading of Verse*, Brander Matthews' *A Study of Versification*, Paul Franklin Baum's *The Principles of English Versification*, and Jay B. Hubbell and John O. Beaty's *An Introduction to Poetry*.

Excellent studies of poetry are Bliss Perry's *A Study of Poetry*, Robert Graves's *On English Poetry*, Max Eastman's *Enjoyment of Poetry*, and John Livingston Lowes's *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*. See also Lowes's brilliant study of Coleridge, *The Road to Xanadu*.

There are excellent essays on poetry by Sir Philip Sidney, Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Hazlitt, Thomas Carlyle, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and others.

CHAPTER VIII. LITERARY CRITICISM AND ITS CRITICS

William James's "Philosophy and its Critics" may be found in either *Some Problems of Philosophy* or *Selected Papers on Philosophy*. For examples of bad criticism, see Albert Mordell's *Notorious Literary Attacks*. Professor Albert Feuillerat's article, "Scholarship and Literary Criticism," in *The Yale Review* for January, 1925, is a much needed plea for cooperation between the critic and the investigator. The best statement of the author's case against the critic is found in Alexander Pope's "Essay on Criticism." See *The New Republic* symposium on "The Function of Criticism" in the issue for October 26, 1921, and Irving Babbitt's review of the symposium in the same magazine for January 25, 1922.

CHAPTER IX. THE FUNCTIONS OF LITERATURE AND
CRITICISM

Anatole France's critical views will be found in the prefaces to his *On Life and Letters*; some interesting extracts are given in Ludwig Lewisohn's *A Modern Book of Criticism*. Arnold Bennett's view is given in Chapter 3 ("Why a Classic is a Classic") of his *Literary Taste*. J. E. Spingarn's *Creative Criticism* is the best American presentation of Croce's theories. James Cloyd Bowman's excellent collection, *Contemporary American Criticism*, contains Spingarn's "The New Criticism" and two interesting essays discussing the Croce-Spingarn point of view: Irving Babbitt's "Genius and Taste" and H. L. Mencken's "Criticism of Criticism of Criticism." The reader who is interested in sharply contrasting views should read Irving Babbitt's "The Critic and American Life," in *The Forum* for February, 1928, and Howard Mumford Jones's reply, "Professor Babbitt Cross-examined," in *The New Republic* for March 21, 1928. Some excellent comment on Taine's theories will be found in Bliss Perry's *The American Mind*. Tolstoy's *What is Art?* can be obtained in a translation by Aylmer Maude. Stuart P. Sherman's *Matthew Arnold: How to Know Him* is an admirable introduction to the great English critic by a sympathetic interpreter. For Sherman's point of view, see *The Genius of America* or the earlier volume, *On Contemporary Literature*. For Aristotle, see S. H. Butcher's *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, Lane Cooper's *The Poetics of Aristotle*, and Henry Osborn Taylor's *Ancient Ideals*. For Whitman's critical views, see the preface to *Leaves of Grass* and *Democratic Vistas*. On Hazlitt, see P. P. Howe's life of Hazlitt and his book of selections, *The Best of Hazlitt*. Howe is the author of a stimulating little volume, *Criticism*. For Sainte-

Beuve, see Irving Babbitt's *Masters of Modern French Criticism* or Lewis Freeman Mott's *Sainte-Beuve*. For esthetic theories, see C. M. Gayley and F. N. Scott's *Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism*, Mrs. Katherine Gilbert's *Studies in Recent Æsthetic*, Bliss Perry's *A Study of Poetry*, and George Santayana's *The Sense of Beauty*. George Saintsbury's three-volume *History of Criticism* is the standard work on the subject. He is the editor of *Loci Critici, Passages Illustrative of Critical Theory and Practice from Aristotle Downwards*. Norman Foerster's *American Criticism* contains an illuminating analysis of the critical views of Poe, Emerson, Lowell, and Whitman; a final chapter explains fully the critical views of "The New Humanists," a group to which Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmore More, and various others belong. Moulton's *Library of Criticism* contains a vast number of extracts from criticisms of English and American authors.

CHAPTER X. APPLIED CRITICISM: POE AND WHITMAN

For Poe's critical ideas, see the chapter in Foerster's *American Criticism* and compare with it George E. DeMille's "Poe as a Critic," in *The American Mercury* for April, 1925. The most recent life of Poe is Hervey Allen's *Israfel*. For Arnold's touchstone method, see the Introduction to Ward's *English Poets*—the essay was later entitled "The Study of Poetry." For various views of Poe and Whitman, see Moulton's *Library of Criticism*. The best biographies of Whitman are by Bliss Perry, Léon Bazalgette, and Emory Holloway. See also Stevenson's essay on Whitman, Havelock Ellis's *The New Spirit*, and G. R. Elliott's "Gentle Shades of Longfellow," in *The Southwest Review* for April, 1925. For Santayana's view of art and literature, see *The Sense of Beauty, Reason in Art* (in *The Life of Reason*), and *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*. See also

the chapter on Santayana in Mrs. Gilbert's *Studies in Recent Aesthetic*.

CHAPTER XI. DETECTING THE FALSE; RECOGNIZING THE GENUINE

Canby's "Sentimental America" is found in his *Definitions*. For Arnold's comparison of Wordsworth's "Michael" with Tennyson's "Dora," see his "Last Words on Translating Homer." For the present-day view of Tennyson, see Harold Nicolson's *Tennyson* or Henry Ten Eyck Perry's "The Tennyson Tragedy," in *The Southwest Review* for January, 1927.

CHAPTER XII. ON READING NEW BOOKS

See Hazlitt's two essays, "On Reading New Books" and "On Reading Old Books." William McFee's "The Cheer-leader in Literature" is found in Bowman's *Contemporary American Criticism*. Two interesting examples of recent critical estimates of well-known authors, old and new, are found in "The New Order of Critical Values," in *Vanity Fair* for April, 1922, and "Spring Elections on Mount Olympus," in *The Bookman* for May, 1922.

Of the many books dealing with contemporary literature, I mention only a few: Louis Untermeyer's *Modern American Poetry*, *Modern British Poetry*, and *American Poetry since 1900*; Fred Lewis Pattee's *History of American Literature since 1870*; Thomas H. Dickinson's *Chief Contemporary Dramatists*, first and second series; R. W. Pence's *Dramas by Present-day Writers*; Carl Van Doren's *Contemporary American Novelists*; Christopher Morley's *Modern Essays*. The reader who wishes to keep up with the best recent books should read *The Saturday Review of Literature* or some similar publication. For examples of recent criticism, see James Cloyd Bowman's *Contemporary*

American Criticism, William A. Drake's *American Criticism: 1926*, T. K. Whipple's *Spokesmen: Modern Writers and American Life*, and Lewis Worthington Smith's *Current Reviews*. The student who is interested in comparing new and old books will find some interesting examples in C. Alphonso Smith's *Literary Contrasts*.

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This index does not include the Notes or merely incidental references to authors and books. I have, however, endeavored to list all references to important topics which I have discussed and all authors whom I have quoted.

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